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CONQUISTADOR

The Life of
Don Pedro Sarmiento
de Gamboa

2087
STEPHEN CLISSOLD



DEREK VERSCHOYLE
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NOTE ON ILLUSTRATIONS

The illustrations are reproduced from engravings by Theodore de Bry and drawings by Poma de Ayala and represent contrasting European and Indian views of Spanish rule in the Indies.

Theodore de Bry (1528-98) was a distinguished German engraver and an acquaintance of Richard Hakluyt. Some of his finest work is contained in the great collection of illustrated travel narratives entitled *Collectiones Peregrinationum in Indiam Orientalem et Indiam Occidentalem* which was published in twenty-five parts between 1590 and 1634, de Bry's son continuing the work after his death. Poma de Ayala was a Peruvian Indian of noble birth, his mother being a daughter of the great Inca Tupac Yupanqui. After working for many years as an interpreter to the Spaniards and travelling widely throughout Peru, he compiled a curious work entitled *El primero i nueva coronica i buen gobierno*, written in poor Spanish interlarded with Quechua, which gives an account of the country before and after the Spanish conquest. The manuscript, which was completed in 1613, and consists of 1,179 pages with some 300 full page illustrations, is preserved in the Royal Library of Copenhagen.

The end-paper maps have been prepared by my brother, Cmdr P. C. H. Clissold, RNR.

S. C.

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I cannot forbear to commend the patient virtue of the Spaniards. We seldom or never find that any nation hath endured so many misadventures and miseries as the Spaniards have done in their Indian discoveries; yet persisting in their enterprises with invincible constancy, they have annexed to their kingdom so many goodly provinces to bury the remembrance of all dangers past. Tempests and shipwrecks, famine, overthrows, mutinies, heat and cold, pestilence and all manner of diseases both old and new, together with extreme poverty and want of all things needful, have been the enemies wherewith every one of their most noble discoverers at one time or another hath encountered.

Sir Walter Raleigh

CHAPTER ONE

THE MAN AND THE QUEST

Amongst the many ancient and beautiful poems which are the pride of the Spanish *Romancero*, there survives a fragment which relates how one morning the Infante Arnaldos set out a-hunting and beheld a wondrous ship approaching the land – a ship whose sails were fashioned of the finest silk and her rigging of golden thread, and whose chains and anchors of silver lay glittering on her coral deck. And as this fairy vessel came gliding over the water, the helmsman sang to himself a song so sweet and strange that the winds dropped to a whisper and the waves grew still, whilst the gulls flew down to settle on the mast and the fishes rose to the surface of the sea to listen. So compelling was the magic of this song that the Infante Arnaldos implored the singer to teach him its melody. But the mysterious sailor replied: 'My song I only teach to him who sails away with me.'

This fragment is all that remains. We do not know whether the Infante left his hawks and his hounds and embarked forthwith upon the enchanted vessel, nor to what far countries he was borne as he listened to the helmsman's song. But it was this same music, no doubt, which bewitched so many of his countrymen – explorers, adventurers, soldiers of fortune, missionaries and cut-throats – of four and a half centuries ago to set sail for the unknown lands beyond the ocean. Their fathers had ridden to the sound of drum and trumpet to expel the Moorish hosts from Spain. And when the last Moslem citadel at Granada fell, Providence revealed to the gaze of the victori-

ous warriors a new world of incredible strangeness, beauty, and wealth waiting to be won beyond the seas. The reconquest of their fatherland, glorious and dearly purchased as it had been, now appeared as no more than a prelude to the vast design of the conquest of America. And how swift and splendid a conquest it proved to be! The mighty empires of the Aztecs and the Incas, with their teeming cities and towering, blood-defiled temples, fell to a handful of conquistadores whose triumphant march not even the torrid, swampy jungles of the Amazon nor the wind-swept summits of the Andes could arrest.

Our wonder is aroused by the character of these men as much as by the nature of their achievements. In courage, resourcefulness, physical toughness, and sheer determination to triumph over apparently insuperable obstacles, they have certainly never been surpassed. Nor can we readily call to mind their equals in duplicity, greed, and utterly callous and unbridled cruelty. We see them quarrelsome, turbulent, and incorrigibly individualistic, yet one in their loyalty to the King. Their religious devotion, though narrow, is touchingly sincere. They embark on their expeditions with the piety of pilgrims and the cupidity of gamblers. To explain the contradictions and complexities of their character we cannot perhaps do better than say that they are men committed to a quest. And as the goal of their quest is prone to change, so are the paths which they seek to follow and the different qualities of character called forth.

Sometimes a Cortés or a Pizarro would aim true, and reap the prize of imperishable fame and fabulous wealth. Often the goal sought had no more substance than that of a mirage. The veteran Ponce de León ended his days in search of the mythical island of Bimini, with its springs of magic water reputed to restore youth to the aged. Many others perished in quest of the glorious golden city of El Dorado. Sometimes, by a capricious stroke of fortune, the goal achieved was not the one sought. Columbus believed to the day of his death that he had dis-

covered not a new continent but a fresh approach to India, and the New World was long known simply as *Las Indias*. The conquistadores fervently believed in the promise: 'Seek and ye shall find.' But there was no assurance that what they found would be what they had sought.

Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa, whose adventures and misadventures form the subject of this book, was one of those who sought, ardently and tirelessly, for the renown which crowns great exploits in discovery, conquest and colonisation. And as Fame is a many-visaged goddess, he sought to woo her too in many guises; as navigator, admiral, and astronomer; as soldier, explorer, and coloniser; as scholar, historian, man of letters, diplomatic envoy, even as necromancer. So we find him involved in many of the most hazardous and varied undertakings of the day – sailing across the Pacific to discover the Solomon Islands, crossing Peru in the Viceroy's suite to gather material for his history of the Incas, pursuing and seizing the last of the Inca princes, disputing with the Inquisition, campaigning against wild cannibal tribes, vainly hastening in pursuit of Francis Drake, threading the labyrinthine channels leading to the Straits of Magellan, pleading at the Court of the King of Spain and returning to undertake his greatest and most disastrous attempt at colonisation leading to his capture by Raleigh, his appearance before Queen Elizabeth at Windsor, his last confidential mission to King Philip and his crowning misfortunes in the dungeons of his Huguenot enemies.

Sarmiento's quest brought him little enough of the fame which he so passionately desired, and more than his fair share of perils and hardships, wounds, sickness, and imprisonment, enmities, misunderstanding, and ultimate neglect. He was born some decades too late, when the most glittering prizes of the New World had already been won by others, and corruption, prevarication, and bureaucratic muddle had blunted the heroic temper of the early conquistadores. Success ever eluded him.

The crowning enterprise of his career, to which he devoted so many arduous years, was to founder in one of the greatest Spanish disasters of his time. Then, for close on two centuries, the very memory of the man and his deeds lay dimmed until the rediscovery and publication of his voluminous and varied writings revealed his full stature as navigator, soldier, administrator, and man of letters, and the barren soil which he had tilled in faith began to yield its fruit for others.

Despite the considerable documentation which survives, there are parts of the portrait and gaps in the story which must remain blank. Next to nothing is known with certainty of his early life, and nothing – beyond the fact that he was small and tough in body – of his personal appearance. No hints of love or courtship creep into the sterner chronicles of voyaging and war. Nor do we know anything of the circumstances of his death. Yet enough is left perhaps for us to trace the outline of a life which remains remarkable in an age of notable events, and of a personality which, in a century prodigal of great men, must still be accounted great.

CHAPTER TWO

BEFORE THE HOLY OFFICE

Pedro Sarmiento first stands revealed to us by the light of contemporary documents in a predicament more apt to mark the end of an unconventional career than its outset. We find him striving to clear himself of the charges of necromancy brought against him by the Inquisition at Lima.

'On the second day of the month of December of the year 1564, in the City of the Kings, His Most Reverend Lordship summoned to his presence Pedro Sarmiento, who took the oath in the name of God and Saint Mary, placing his right hand upon a cross and a copy of the holy gospels, thereby pledging himself to speak the truth. The following questions were then put to him:

'Questioned as to his name and that of his parents, and likewise the place of his birth, he answered that he was called Pedro Sarmiento and was born in Alcalá de Henares, and that his father was called Bartolomé Sarmiento and his mother María de Gamboa; that his father came from Pontevedra, in the Kingdom of Galicia, and his mother from Bilbao, in Viscaya.

'He was asked how long a time he had been in these parts, and for what reason he first came here, and whether he had lived elsewhere outside this city. He declared that he had been in this country a matter of seven years or so, and that he had come, as others came, to seek his fortune, and that he had travelled by way of Mexico and Guatemala.

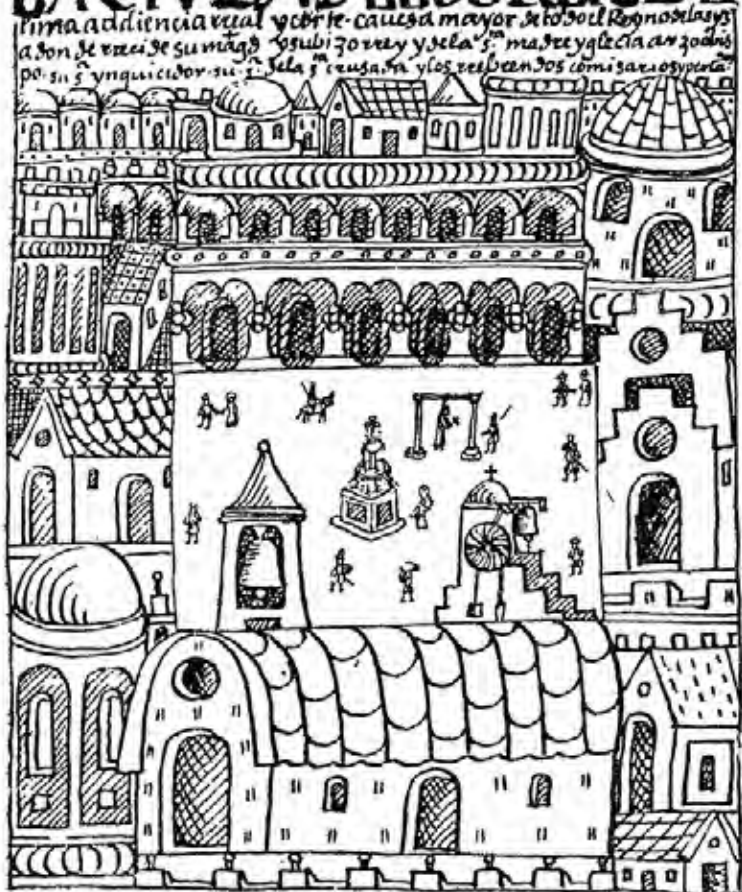
'He was then asked whether, in treating with a certain person

in this city, he had declared that he knew how to make a certain ink which, if they used it to write a letter to a woman, would make her fall in love with the person or persons who had written it, though she might have had no love for them at all before. He answered that once, when holding converse with a woman called La Paiba, a servant of the Conde de Nieva, late Viceroy of this realm, on light and foolish matters of love, the said Paiba asked the accused whether he knew of anything which would make a woman fall in love with a man, and the accused told the said Paiba that in Spain he had heard of an ink which would make a woman love the man who wrote with it, but that he did not believe in it, neither had he experimented with it himself, nor seen others experiment with it, nor had he any mind to do so, as he held it for a vain conceit, so that he had neither used it himself nor knew of any one else who had done so, although he did mention one or two things which he had heard related of this ink.*

The man who stood before the Inquisition on a charge of dabbling in witchcraft was, we learn from the above account, a native of Alcalá de Henares, the city of Cervantes, the son of a Galician father and a Vizcayan mother. Elsewhere he boasts that he was 'well-born, of parents and ancestors of noble stock who had lived and died honourably and worthily in the royal service'. We have no record of the exact date of his birth – it may have been in 1530 or a little later – but we know that his youth was spent in Galicia, in whose small but flourishing ports and deep, sheltered bays he must have first heard the call of the sea. The province was already famous for its seamen and explorers. It was a ship of the Galician fleet under the celebrated Gomez Charino which claimed the honour of having broken the chain across the Guadalquivir at the taking of Seville in 1248. Colombus too had once sailed from a Galician port in a Galician ship, *La Gallega*, and there were even some local

*J. T. Medina: *Historia del Tribunal del Santo Oficio en Chile*, pp 309-338.

CIVDAD LA CIVDA DE LOS REIS DE



Lima, City of the Kings. From a drawing by Poma de Ayala, showing the plaza with the fountain and gallows in the middle.

patriots who proudly claimed him as a fellow countryman. In Sarmiento's youth the New World was attracting the most adventurous spirits of the province and those who stayed at home were beginning to find their traditional way of life changed by the discoveries and riches of America, for explorers had brought back specimens of the wonderful maize plant which was steadily ousting the traditional chestnut as the staple food of the people.

In Galicia, Sarmiento must have acquired other things besides a thorough familiarity with the sea and the art of navigation as it was then known. The Galicians were a devout and God-fearing people, but their piety was mingled with superstition, and the old magical practices lived on despite the vigilance of the Church. Priscillian, the first heretic to be condemned to death by the Catholic Church on account of his addiction to the magic arts, had achieved great popularity in Galicia, and his body had been secretly buried there and was long held in veneration as that of a saint. He had, furthermore, been a man of virtuous life, noble birth, and great intellectual gifts. Could not then sanctity and a scientific interest in the occult arts go hand in hand? To one so irrepressibly curious as Sarmiento in so many branches of knowledge – astronomy, mathematics, navigation – and yet so fervent in his devotion to the Catholic faith, and specially in the cult of Our Lady, it seemed that they could. No one could tell, at the stage then reached by scientific knowledge, what phenomena were 'magical' and what were merely the product of as yet little understood natural processes. Before leaving Spain, it appears that Sarmiento had been experimenting with, amongst other matters, the possibility of forging rings with supernatural, or at least supernormal, properties. On arrival in Peru, his interest in these things had revived and had now landed him in the prisons of the Inquisition.

'Sarmiento was asked', the account of the inquisitorial pro-

ceedings continues, 'whether any inscriptions were written on the said rings, what inscriptions they were, and whether a pause was made in the forging of the rings whilst the inscriptions were inscribed, and whether the work was finished the same day as it was begun. He replied that on the said rings they had put certain letters, names, and astronomical characters, and that the names are not in the Latin tongue, but in the Chaldean, and that they are holy names, taken from the book which contains directions for the making of the said rings together with a text written in five languages, and that the accused cannot recall the said names and characters, but that they are the same as those in the said book; and that in making the rings pause was made only during the hour corresponding to the planet of the said ring, and that he could not remember whether they were completed in one day.

'Then His Most Reverend Lordship showed the said Pedro Sarmiento two golden rings so that he might recognise whether they were those referred to above, and after Pedro Sarmiento had examined them, he said that he believed them to be the same as those the accused had had made by the maestro Duarte, and that this he believed because, when compared with those drawn in the book, they were seen to have the same letters and characters and shape.

'Then His Lordship ordered Pedro Sarmiento to exhibit the book, if he still had it. The said Pedro Sarmiento exhibited before His Lordship two books written on parchment, of small format, one containing seven pages covered with writing and one blank page, the other containing two pages of like size, wherein are likenesses of the said rings, and on the outside a number of lines beginning *hic anullus* and ending *explici consecrato*, the other beginning *benedicante* and ending *seculorum secula, amen*. He likewise exhibited on a small piece of paper another likeness of a ring, whereon was written "the third", and he displayed a silver ring with certain letters and charac-

ters, which he said were of the planet Mars, which ring and books the said Pedro Sarmiento gave up spontaneously; he also declared that he had spoken of these books in confession, both in Spain and latterly in this city, with Friar Francisco de la Cruz, showing them to his confessors who allowed him to keep them on condition that there was nothing more suspicious about the business than the natural rules by which they were to be made according to the science of mathematics. Questioned as to whether, whilst the silversmith was forging the said rings, the accused made some movements with his eyes or hands or any other parts of the body, and uttered other words, and if so, what words, he said that he made no such movements in any way connected with the making of the rings, nor did he speak any words beyond urging that they should be quickly finished; and that this is the Truth, by the oath which he swore.'

Sarmiento's rings were of three kinds. One, of silver, made under the sign of Mars, would bring its wearer good fortune in war; another, of gold, was made under the sign of Venus and would bring success in love; the third, also of gold, was to win the favour of princes. According to the evidence of one of Sarmiento's friends, Gaspar de Losada, an elaborate ceremonial had to accompany the use of these rings; 'First, you must go outside the town and trace a circle, leaving an opening facing the point where the sun rises; take the ring in one hand and the papers in another, reciting what is written therein with a stout heart and without fear.' The inquirer should then take a mirror and bury it inside the circle. After leaving it there for a certain number of days and hours, he could dig it up and read on its surface the answer to that which he wished to know.

These were all practices which smacked strongly of witchcraft. The Archbishop of Lima would no doubt have regarded the accused with still deeper disfavour had he then known, as he afterwards learnt, that Sarmiento had fallen foul of the Inquisition before. The earlier affair had been more in the nature

of an ill-judged practical joke – one of those boisterous and heavy-handed *burlas* we so often read of in *Don Quixote* and the Spanish picaresque novels. After a youth spent in the ships or the *tercios* of Spain, Sarmiento had travelled to Mexico where he seems to have made friends with the nephews of the Bishop of Tlaxcala, and ardently espoused their side in a quarrel with a certain Don Diego Rodriguez, a gentleman of property in the neighbouring town of Puebla de los Angeles. Sarmiento made an effigy of Don Diego, dressed it up in a penitential robe known as a *sambenito*, and hung a placard round its neck announcing that the Inquisition therewith condemned the heretic to be burnt. But even in distant Mexico, the Holy Office was not a body to be trifled with. The practical-joker was arrested and condemned to a public flogging in the main square of Puebla. For the Inquisition saw in Sarmiento's act more than an unseemly and disrespectful prank; it recognised in it a familiar practice of sympathetic magic, by which the fate of the effigy might be induced to befall the man himself.

After this unfortunate episode, Sarmiento had deemed it prudent to seek fame and fortune elsewhere. But one impression of Mexico must have remained with him long after the recollection of Don Diego's effigy and its painful consequences had faded – that of the astonishing barbaric civilisation whose imposing vestiges still rose in such splendour at Cholula, but eight miles from Puebla. There he had gazed with awe upon the great pyramid raised by the labour of innumerable hands to mark the spot where the god Quetzalcoatl had once dwelt to teach the Toltecs the arts of civilisation. The summit of the pyramid had formerly been crowned with a sumptuous edifice to house the image of the god, resplendent with collar of beaten gold and with pendants of turquoise mosaics hanging from his ears, a jewelled sceptre in one hand and in the other a shield curiously painted to depict his dominion over the four winds. On the temple altars human victims had been sacrificed

and their remains cast to feed the undying fires whose radiance lit the skies above the Toltec capital. At the foot of the temple Cortés had found a populous city and fought a great battle in which 6,000 Indians had perished. The lofty temple had been torn down and its treasures robbed and scattered. But the memory of these vanished glories still lived on amongst the Indians to whose tales Sarmiento, ardent in his quest of the extraordinary and the heroic, had eagerly listened. He must have learnt too of the still greater marvels to be found in that other mighty Indian empire far to the south, where the majesty of the Incas still lingered on and rival bands of conquistadores warred amongst themselves for power and riches. In those distant lands, still imperfectly explored and subdued, he thought to find the stuff for which his hunger for fame and adventure craved. So Pedro Sarmiento had set out for Peru.

The long way south led through Chiapas, today the most southerly province of Mexico and then a part of the Captaincy-General of Guatemala. Here Sarmiento found a land of fertile valleys surrounded by dense tropical forests where the brilliantly-coloured Quetzal, or bird-of-paradise, made its home, and leopards, tigers, and wild boars roamed beneath a luxuriant variety of precious trees – ebony, mahogany, rubber, coconut, balsam – to which Spanish settlers had begun to add plantations of palms, dates, vines and other trees from the old world. In the hot and moisture-laden air of the forest many species of gorgeous orchids thrived, whilst the natives, naturally intelligent and now reconciled to Spanish rule, had already learnt to keep cattle and horses in the favoured, well watered valleys. Vast ruins, more ancient and impressive even than those of Mexico, stood half-hidden by the encroaching jungle and told of the vanished civilisation of races which had possessed the land before it was won for the Spanish crown by Diego de Mazari-ego thirty years before. The conquerer of Chiapas had been a just and humane man, but he had been followed by the cruel

and rapacious Juan Enrique de Guzmán who ruled over his Indians in intolerable tyranny. The Indians had at last found a champion in the person of their bishop, the celebrated Bartolomé de las Casas, who had once been a conquistador himself but had been converted and moved to espouse the cause of the oppressed natives with such zeal that the royal conscience had been touched and the powerful land-owners angered and alarmed at the prospect of losing the absolute and arbitrary control which they exercised over their natives.

Sarmiento tells us that he heard much of these 'most pertinacious differences' between Las Casas and the Spanish *encomenderos* as he journeyed through Chiapas. This issue, with all its theological, political, and economic implications, was one of the most hotly contested of the day, for it implied a challenge to such fundamental matters as the very title of the King of Spain to sovereignty in the New World. Into this dispute Sarmiento was later to throw himself with characteristic fervour and his major literary and historical work was composed to vindicate his view of the controversy. But, for the present, Sarmiento had more pressing cares and interests. He reached Peru with few prospects and less money: 'as others came', as he frankly admitted to the Inquisitors, 'to seek his fortune'.

Of how he spent his first five years in Peru we have no exact record. He must surely have travelled widely, following the Inca highways to Cuzco, the famed capital of their empire, and to the other ancient cities, or the newer settlements founded by the Spaniards, throughout the length and breadth of the country. He began to pick up something of their language and to learn what he could of their legends and their history. We can see him talking to all and sundry, questioning, speculating, and noting down what the local chieftains or *curacas* had to tell him of the days before the coming of the Spaniards. He listened to the tales of Inca conquest, the triumphs of their armies and the intrigues of their court. He must have lent a willing ear too

to the lore of their wise men and to stories of the famed necromancers of old who could fly at will through the air to spy out distant lands and could discern the portents of the heavens, so different from the familiar skies of Spain – the celestial alpaca, whose fleece was the myriad stars of the Milky Way, or the full moon, where the goddess Quilla lay still in the embrace of her canine lover.

For some time at least we know that Sarmiento resided in Lima where he had been offered a post as teacher of Latin grammar in one of the Dominican colleges, possibly in the University of San Marcos which was then housed in the monastery of the Dominicans. Unlike many of the conquistadores who, as Pizarro himself, were incapable of writing their own names, Sarmiento prided himself on his knowledge of letters. He read Virgil assiduously, bespattered his prose with Latinisms, and spoke Latin fluently enough to hold his own, years later, with Queen Elizabeth when a prisoner at her court. But he was altogether too restless, too irascible, too consumed with the urge to heroic action to devote himself fully to the quiet walks of scholarship. He may also, at that period, have had a strong disposition towards gallantry and social life. When, in 1561, Don Diego Lopez de Zuñiga y Velasco, Conde de Nieva, was appointed Viceroy of Peru, Sarmiento soon became intimate with the Count and his son. The new Viceroy was noted for his pursuit of feminine charm no less than for his addiction to astrology.

The Conde de Nieva's rule was brief and ended in sudden and scandalous disaster. On the morning of 20th February 1564, his lifeless body was discovered in a Lima street and the inquest opened by his successor, the Licendiado del Castro, had to be dropped for the scabrous revelations, threatening to destroy all public respect for the viceregal office, to which it gave rise. An obliging priest was hastily produced to save appearances by declaring that the Count's death had been brought

about by an attack of apoplexy resulting from his unwise habit of imbibing immoderate quantities of iced water. All the same, the event left a profound impression, and it was popularly believed that the Viceroy's sudden end had been clearly predicted by the stars. Writing in his *Annales del Peru* the same year, the chronicler Fernando Montesinos describes how an unnamed friend of the Viceroy, being well versed in astrology, had clearly warned him of his fate. No specific mention is made of Pedro Sarmiento but there can be little doubt that this astrologer was none other than himself. Before the year was out, he was called upon to face the tribunal headed by the Archbishop as acting Inquisitor, on those charges of necromancy and witchcraft which we have already noted.

The matter of La Paiba, the Viceroy's serving-girl, and the magic ink was clearly a puerile charge which the Inquisitors do not seem to have pressed. Since all enquiries into the circumstances of the Viceroy's death had been prudently dropped, the business of the rings remained the gravest grounds for suspicion. Sarmiento admitted that he had made the rings but rejected with vehemence the accusation of necromancy. He had submitted the whole affair, he declared, to his confessor, Father Francisco de la Cruz, a Dominican who was at that time Rector of the University and held in high esteem for his sanctity and learning, but who was later to fall foul of the Inquisition himself and end his life at the stake. There was nothing wrong with the manuscript, Father Francisco had assured him, for 'it treated of the use of little known natural forces'. Such an admirably open-minded view accorded with Sarmiento's own opinion of the matter, and he vociferously proclaimed his own innocence before the tribunal, even trying to shout down his judges until the Archbishop sternly enjoined silence. Then a council of theologians and Jesuits was summoned to consider the case and their verdict was given on 8th May 1565. Sarmiento was condemned to hear a penitential mass in the

Cathedral, to make public abjuration of his sins, and to suffer perpetual banishment 'from all His Majesty's Indies'. Until an opportunity came for him to embark for Spain, he was to be confined to a monastery where he should be deprived of the use of any writings which might again lead him astray and he was to fast twice a week and read the penitential psalms.

Sarmiento was not the sort of man to accept a sentence like this, lenient though it was, without demur. He announced that he would appeal against it to the Pope. The matter would have been carried further in all probability had not the Governor, the *Licenciado del Castro*, intervened and persuaded the accused to carry out the light part of the sentence and the Archbishop to commute the verdict of banishment. The penitent – not a very grateful or docile one – was thus permitted to reside in Lima and was later given permission to travel to Cuzco and other parts of the country. But Peru, like Mexico, had now been rendered unsafe for his questing and adventurous temperament. It was wiser to go whither the jealous eye of the Church could no longer follow him. Everything now spoke in favour of a return to his old profession of sailor and navigator. Sarmiento's thoughts turned with ardour to the boundless waters of the South Sea which the Spaniards claimed as their preserve but had done little as yet to explore. There new lands doubtless awaited discovery; perhaps the famed *El Dorado* itself which some sought across the lofty peaks of the Andes and amidst the torrid Amazonian jungle, but which others held might lie across the ocean. If not gold, then at least spices of almost equal value would be found in those islands. A curious tradition related that it was there that King Solomon had procured the precious woods for the adornment of his great temple. In the exploration and conquest of these famed isles Sarmiento would find an enterprise after his own heart. He may too, as we shall see, have glimpsed the possibility of a still greater discovery.

CHAPTER THREE

THE DISCOVERY OF THE SOLOMON ISLANDS

More than one old Spanish chronicler had spoken with assurance of the existence of islands in the Pacific. Cieza de León believed the Indians' tales of 'very great islands, inhabited by a prosperous people and having great store of gold and silver, fruit trees, and many other riches, and it is even said that they came to the mainland in great canoes to trade their wares, and some Spaniards of our nation say that in Acari, which is one of the valleys of which I have written, there may be seen a great piece of one of those canoes, which proves the truth of these reports . . . Albeit those islands are far out to sea, there is no doubt that they could be discovered if good pilots set forth in their quest.' Cieza de León adds that when he left Peru in 1550, the discovery of the Pacific islands had been entrusted to Captain Gómez de Solís. This expedition never took place, but there were others who aspired to the venture. The Licenciado de Castro had been approached by a merchant named Pedro de Ahedo who offered to send an expedition at his own expense, and the Governor would have agreed to the proposal had he not learnt in time that a band of desperadoes were scheming to enlist under Ahedo and then to seize his ships on the high seas and turn their hands to the lucrative business of piracy.

Sarmiento may have known of Ahedo's plans, but it could hardly have been the hope of commercial profit which prompted him to emulation. 'I went a-voyaging not to trade, but to

discover new lands,' he asserted later with characteristic arrogance. Moreover, his interest in South Sea exploration had arisen from very different sources. On his wanderings through the ancient empire of the Incas, he had heard how one of their rulers, the great Tupac Yupanqui, had extended his conquests to the ocean and discovered and conquered two rich islands in the Pacific. The tradition was well attested and was later recorded by Sarmiento as follows:

'As the Inca Tupac Yupanqui was marching and conquering along the coast of Manta and the island of la Puna and Tumbez, there arrived merchants who had come across the sea from the west, navigating on rafts with sails. From them he learnt of the land from which they came, which was composed of some islands called Avachumbi and Ninachumbi, where there were many people and much gold. And as Tupac Inca was a man of courage and high ambition and did not remain content with the land which he had conquered, he resolved to see whether his good fortune would hold at sea. But he did not lightly believe the seafaring traders, for he declared that princes should not be too ready to believe such men, for they are great talkers. And so, to obtain further information, and as it was a matter which could not easily be ascertained, he summoned a man whom he took with him on his conquests called Antarqui, whom all declare to have been a great sorcerer who could even fly through the air. This man Tupac Inca asked whether all that the seafaring traders said about the isles was true. After thinking it over well, Antarqui replied that what they said was true, and that he would go there first himself. And they relate that he was transported thither by his arts, tried out the route, and beheld the islands, their people and wealth, and returned to give confirmation of all this to the Inca Tupac.

'When he had received this assurance, the Inca resolved to set forth. To this end he gathered together a great quantity of rafts, on which he embarked more than 20,000 chosen

soldiers . . . Tupac Inca then set sail and discovered the islands of Avachumbi and Ninachumbi and returned bringing with him black folk, much gold, a chair of brass and the skin and jawbone of a horse; which trophies were kept in the fortress of Cuzco until the times of the Spaniards. This skin and jawbone were in the keeping of an Inca noble, who is still alive and supplied this information. He was present too when other Indians confirmed it, and his name is Urco Guaranga. I am particular about these details, for those who know something of the Indies will find the matter strange and difficult to believe.'

The Licenciado de Castro, the prudent lawyer who had stepped into the shoes of the late Conde de Nieva, was scarcely likely to be impressed by tales of magicians spirited through the air as an aid to discovery, nor would anyone so recently in bad odour with the Inquisition as Sarmiento stand much chance of being entrusted with the command of any expedition of importance. But Sarmiento was shrewd enough to put forward a more attractive proposal. Why should not the Governor give command of the expedition to his own nephew, the youthful Alvaro de Mendaña, sending Sarmiento with him as an experienced navigator and cosmographer? The royal treasury would pay the expenses of the expedition, which finally amounted to no less than 60,000 ducats (though Ahedo had proposed to do it for 4,000, all paid from his own pocket). The glory and profit of discovery would no doubt go to uncle and nephew. But Sarmiento would at least have the proud satisfaction of knowing that it was his hand which had set the course. These persuasions at length carried the day. Headed by Mendaña as 'General' and with Sarmiento as *jefe de ruta*, the expedition consisting of two ships and 150 men finally set sail from Callao, the port of Lima, on 20th November 1567.

The compromise arrangement over the command of the expedition was a highly unsatisfactory one and jeopardised its

success from the outset. Perhaps Sarmiento relied on his force of personality and superior experience to overawe the young General, whose age did not exceed twenty-two years and whose heart was with the bride he intended to marry on his return. The sailing instructions for the expedition laid down that they should occupy and begin to colonise any suitable territories encountered on their voyage. It is doubtful whether Mendaña, his Chief Pilot Hernán Gallego, or other members of the expedition who seem to have toyed with the commercially attractive idea of visiting the Spice Islands or the Philippines, had any serious intention of carrying out that part of their instructions. The course that the expedition was to follow was soon the object of heated dispute. The Governor's instructions laid it down that the course was only to be changed in consultation with the *jefe de ruta*. But it soon became clear that Mendaña and the Chief Pilot favoured a course which would take them westwards almost along the latitude of the equator. Sarmiento wanted to sail much further to the south.

What precisely he hoped to discover on this voyage it is not easy to say. Certainly something more than the islands, remote and scarcely suitable for colonisation, which they later encountered. In his narrative, Sarmiento makes it clear that he wanted to proceed to southern latitudes, 'where lay the whole land-mass in quest of which I had set out'. Elsewhere he speaks of sailing 'in search of the great land' to the south. Did Sarmiento then suspect the existence of Australia? More probably he shared the belief of many of his contemporaries that there existed a great southern continent, the eastern tip of which was formed by Tierra del Fuego, the northern shores projecting up into the heart of the Pacific so that they could be encountered by a vessel sailing from Peru in a south-westerly direction. Sarmiento must have secured the Licendiado de Castro's authorisation for this voyage on convincing him of the probabilities of his hypothesis, for the alleged existence of a Terra Australis

had been postulated as far back as Pythagoras and his followers, who held it to be essential for the 'balance' of the terrestrial globe, and the myth was to persist down to the time of Alexander Dalrymple in the eighteenth century until finally dissipated by the discoveries of James Cook. Cotoira, who served in Mendaña's expedition as Chief Purser, refers in his account of the voyage to Sarmiento's expectation of encountering a sign of the existence of the fabled continent in the form of a certain 'Cabo de la Cruz, which Pedro Sarmiento informed Your Lordship was 1,200 leagues from this kingdom in 8° S, with a long stretch of coast extending for 500 leagues and more in the latitudes of 1-8°, but though we navigated 1,500 leagues, and 1,000 from East to West in a lower latitude than 8°, we did not find it nor see it to be so'.

At first, the voyage held out some promise of realising Sarmiento's expectations. On 4th December the look-out sighted what appeared to be a distant object on the horizon. Sarmiento at once pronounced it to be the two islands of Avachumbi and Ninachumbi discovered by the Inca Tupac Yupanqui. The General and the Chief Pilot, who set little store by Sarmiento's historical researches, held that it was nothing but a bank of low-lying clouds and refused even to change course and investigate. Their scepticism seems to have been justified. Sarmiento records the latitude of his alleged isles as 14° S, and their distance from Peru as 200 leagues - a position where no land is now known to exist. The expedition sailed on, passing, after some seventeen days, within a few leagues of the Marquesas which Alvaro de Mendaña was destined to discover twenty-seven years later. A more northerly course was now being followed, and when ships had worked their way up to within some five degrees of the Equator without any sign of land, Mendaña, now anxious and harassed by the mounting discontent of his men, yielded to Sarmiento's persuasions and set course again to the south-west. On 15th January 1568, land was at last sighted.

This island the Spaniards christened *Nombre de Jesús*. Most probably it was identical with what we now know as *Nuke-fetau*, one of the *Ellice* group – a small isle inhabited by ancestors of the native population of to-day. Gallego, the Chief Pilot, at first held it to be a desert island, and thinking it unlikely that so small a coral atoll could support life, was unwilling to risk bringing his ship to land through the treacherous reefs. But soon seven or eight canoes put out from shore to reconnoitre the strangers. They were too frightened to approach the ships, and contented themselves with waving flags and lighting fires to serve as charms against the mysterious white men. Their magic soon seemed to take effect. When the Chief Pilot at length attempted to obey the General's instructions and make for land, he found that the ships had fallen to leeward and, try as they would, could not draw near the shore. The fury and bitter disappointment of the Spaniards were great. They had been nearly two months at sea, their water was tainted, many were sick, and all were impatient to set foot on land. But the winds and currents swept them relentlessly westwards until *Nombre de Jesús* with its dusky natives was lost to view.

Two weeks later, on the eve of the feast of *Candelmas*, some reefs were sighted to which the Spaniards gave the name of *La Candelaria*. Another week, and land once more came into view – this time, land so extensive and mountainous that some proclaimed it to be the fringe of a great continent, perhaps that which *Sarmiento* claimed they would have encountered had they followed his course to the south. In gratitude to the patron saint of the expedition, on whose feast day they had set sail from *Callao*, the Spaniards thought to christen the land *Santa Isabel*, and because they observed the happy omen of a star shining brightly over the bay for which they were heading, though the sun was high in the heavens, they gave it the name of *Santa Isabel de la Estrella*. Steering boldly for this star, the Chief Pilot brought his ships safely over the reefs which



Spaniards landing on an Indian Island.

shielded the entrance to the bay. But the omens were not all propitious. As they drew near to the land, a huge slab of cliff towering high above the water and covered with trees and matted shrubs, suddenly cracked asunder and came hurtling down into the sea.

The Spaniards had little time to meditate on the meaning of this fell portent. The natives, paddling graceful, crescent-shaped canoes, put out hurriedly from the land and stared up in fear and wonder at the tall ships. To signify his rank to them the General stood on the quarter-deck and donned a fine scarlet cap, and then threw down other caps to the Indians who picked them up eagerly and adorned their own chiefs with them, proudly repeating the words *tauriqui*, *tauriqui*! The chief or *tauriqui* of the natives wore a headdress of black and white feathers, and his arms glistened with bracelets of polished bone

which gleamed in the sunshine like alabaster. The natives soon let their curiosity get the better of their fear and scrambled on board the ships where they picked up any objects which caught their fancy and threw them quickly down to their comrades in the boats. They seemed intelligent and wonderfully quick at copying the words and gestures of the white men, who soon lost patience with their shameless pilfering and began to chase them from the ships with cries of '*afuera!* - away! - *afuera!*' '*Afuera!*' echoed the savages unabashed, and the word became the rallying-cry with which they were to attempt to drive the invaders from their land.

Mendaña was resolved to treat the natives with kindness and toleration, as the Governor's instructions laid down. The first steps, to which novelty lent attraction, were easy enough. The Spaniards taught the savages how to make the sign of the cross, and the more pious soon had them repeating the words of the *Paternoster* and the *Credo*. The *tauriqui* Biley Banharra insisted on exchanging names with the General - a deep bond of brotherhood - and repeated the word 'Mendaña' to himself with signs of the greatest satisfaction. How far he understood the Spaniards' real intentions is not recorded, but Mendaña asserts in his official report that Biley Banharra willingly swore allegiance to the King of Spain, and solemnly repeated the oath three times whilst the chief scribe of the expedition duly recorded it.

After the Spaniards had landed and raised a lofty wooden cross in token of their taking possession of the island in the name of God and His Catholic Majesty, the King of Spain, Mendaña summoned a council of war to decide on the future course of operations. The natives, he pointed out, had been profuse in their promises of food, but so far had produced nothing in quantities sufficient to replenish the Spaniards' dwindling stocks of provisions. It was therefore necessary to send out a foraging party into the interior. Then, turning to Friar Fran-

cisco de Galvez, the Vicar-General, Mendaña asked whether such a step would be in conformity with Christian faith and morals. Friar Francisco, who was the keeper of the conscience of the expedition – indeed a sort of religious commissar – replied that it would be legitimate to send such a foraging party providing it secured the food in return for pay or for barter, and that the amounts requisitioned were not such as to cause hardship. On no account were the Spaniards to resort to violence and they should only make use of their arms if attacked by the natives. The General approved the Friar's sage counsel and commanded Pedro Sarmiento to lead a small expedition into the interior to explore and seek provisions, whilst the Chief Pilot supervised the construction of a small brigantine which could be sent out to reconnoitre the shores and neighbouring islands without risking the big ships.

Sarmiento has left us no full description of the natives amongst whom he and his men were to venture forth, but we learn from Mendaña's narrative how they appeared in the eyes of the Spaniards. 'There are Indians of different complexions in this island,' the General wrote: 'Some are of the same hue as those of Peru, others are black, and a few (either those who seldom leave their huts, or else young lads) are quite fair. They all curl and dye their hair, some of them bleaching it a light colour; others are fair-haired by nature. The women are better-looking than those of Peru, but they greatly disfigure themselves by blackening their teeth, which they make a special point of doing, the men no less than the women. The boys and girls are more handsome and less ill-favoured, for their teeth are white. The women wear their hair cut short, so that it does not reach their shoulders; it is ruddy in colour. The men clip theirs in various ways. Some have tonsures like friars, some cut their hair as we do, some shave nearly half the back of their head, some leave a patch of hair which gives the effect of a cap worn on one side. Some leave two locks on their temples



Battle between Indians and Spaniards.

which grow so long that they reach above the ear to below the breast, and they wear it in a plait. Others do not cut their hair but twist it into coils like a turban; they curl the ends on each side until it reaches the ears, and then they make another small curl from the back of the skull to the forehead. Their tongues and lips are very red, for they colour them with a herb which they eat.'

The land which this strange and handsome race inhabited was equally exotic. 'In this island of Santa Isabel,' Mendaña tells us, 'there are parrots, white, green, red, tawny and variegated. Some of them are marked like magpies, and some are multi-coloured. There are also peacocks, pheasants, eagles, and other birds of prey; there are doves larger than the largest wood-pigeons of Spain, and some have a fleshy protuberance

above the nostrils, like the half of a pomegranate, only red. Their plumage resembles that of the peacock's tail. There are also small dogs like those of Castille. They eat the bark of a certain tree which resembles cinnamon, though it smells rather like fennel and its taste is exactly that of cloves; when a little is placed on the tongue it forms a thin skin, as does the finest cinnamon; it must be highly prized, for on two occasions they gave me pieces which did not weigh half an ounce. There are trees which yield a gum with a very pleasant aromatic smell, and others from which blood seems to flow when the bark is cut, and if it is cut between the bark and the core and cast into the water it dyes it a deep blue, the core being yellow. This we found out whilst felling timber for repairing ships. There is sarsaparilla and an abundance of sweet basil, and dragon-wort. On a little hillock above the place where we built the brigantine, we found a kind of grass which Gaspar de Colmenares grasped in his hand, and wherever the leaves touched him, he said he felt as if he had been burnt, so great was the pain . . . There are fragrant odours from the trees and herbs all over the mountain-side in the island. There are also oranges which the Indians neither eat nor know the use of; there are cypress nuts resembling those of Cartagena in shape and colour; they grow upon a thistle, but the Indians do not eat them; their natural smell is like that of a pumpkin. I would never allow any to be eaten. There are trees which bear a white flower which smells much like jasmine, and the blossom of another tree smells like the musk rose.'

Such was the plant and animal life which flourished on the exotic island which Sarmiento, at the head of a small band of Spaniards, was now called upon to explore. Progress through the tropical forest was slow. After covering little more than seven leagues, the Spaniards found themselves on the banks of a river where they deemed it prudent to pitch camp. The intentions of the Indians were obscure; their timid overtures of

friendship were unaccompanied by the supplies which were the hungry men's chief concern, and Sarmiento suspected that they but aimed at luring the expedition into an ambush. Amongst the natives approaching the Spaniards with these equivocal gestures was one who, we read in Catoira's narrative, was 'of good appearance, decked out with sprigs of greenery after the fashion of savages, and wearing on his head a garland of many-scented herbs, of which there are a great quantity in this land, and carrying a heavy club of ebony on his shoulder, and three or four roots of *vinahus* which he presented to Sarmiento'. If this was a token of good faith, Sarmiento had little confidence in it. From the depths of the forest he could hear the deep conch-notes summoning the Indian braves to arms. Darkness fell, and a heavy tropical rain set in. Sarmiento posted sentries over his little camp with strict instructions to keep their matches dry and discharge their arquebuses every quarter of an hour or so throughout the night to frighten the natives off. The following morning, seeing that it was impossible to make further headway without engaging in an open clash with the natives against the General's orders, Sarmiento decided to lead his men back to the ships. The Indians hung about the retreating Spaniards in the shelter of the trees, uttering vigorous cries of *afuera, afuera!* To ensure their safety, Sarmiento thought it prudent to seize a chief called Havi, the uncle of the Biley Banharra who had changed names so proudly with Mendaña, and to hold him hostage.

On returning to the ships, Sarmiento found the General highly indignant that they had laid hands on an important chieftain in defiance of his instructions, and Sarmiento was ordered to return with his captive and release him in the presence of the natives. This was a mission which must have been particularly irksome to Sarmiento's proud spirit. But Havi was duly escorted back to his people and set free amidst their clamorous rejoicing. The savages made signs to the Spaniards

to put out their matches if they wished food to be brought to them. Food was indeed brought and placed at a safe distance from the white men, but Sarmiento, ever wary, did not let his men lay down their arms. He suspected that they were by no means at the end of their troubles with the natives.

Mendaña now proposed to despatch a stronger force to reconnoitre and forage. Pedro de Ortega, the Master of the Camp, was placed in command of sixty well-equipped men and set off to ascend the range of mountains which rose steeply behind the shore. The natives of the coastal settlements, the people of Biley Banharra and Havi, greeted the Spaniards in friendly fashion, but as the expedition marched on up the thickly wooded slopes of the mountains they encountered a new tribe of hostile savages who fled as the white men approached their villages. Suspecting that they were manoeuvring to launch an attack on the rear of his men, Ortega managed to seize a chief as hostage and pushed on slowly to the summit, which they reached after an arduous climb and desultory clashes with the natives. Here a magnificent panorama spread itself at their feet. Now, for the first time, they could confirm their surmise that the land was indeed an island. The captive chief drew for them a rough map in the dust with a stick, showing where lay the *caba* or land, and where the *sina* (sea). But that same night he managed to escape from his guards and the next day, as the Spaniards began to make their way down the mountain, they were assaulted by a large body of natives. The Spaniards at first replied by burning down the huts and discharging their arquebuses into the air. But the Indians pressed home their attacks, wounding two Spaniards with arrows, one of them fatally. It was only after a volley had been fired against their assailants, and one of them stretched dead on the ground, that the Spaniards could find peace from these molestations. When they reached the valley once more, the chief Biley Banharra was awaiting them with peace offer-

ings and new protestations of friendship. But the Spaniards did not fail to recognise – or were they mistaken, for the savages looked all so much alike? – that this man had been amongst their assailants of but a few hours ago.

Whilst Ortega and his men had been away in the interior, the Chief Pilot had succeeded in almost completing the brigantine, some of the material for which they had brought with them from Peru, supplementing it with timber selected from the forests of the island. The General's plan was to send the brigantine on ahead to reconnoitre the neighbouring islands, so that the larger ships could then venture out in safety. It was a prudent course which the impetuous Sarmiento criticised as over-cautious, though he was himself to adopt the same procedure in later expeditions. But before the brigantine was ready, there occurred a gruesome episode which confirmed the Spaniards in their resolve to seek more promising islands. Six or seven canoe-loads of natives approached the shore and sent an envoy to the Spaniards to offer them, evidently as a highly esteemed delicacy, a joint of meat which they recognised with horror to be the quarters of a human body. Catoira the Purser, who witnessed the scene, tells us that 'it was the right arm, with all the shoulder; it seemed to be that of a boy who had a small hand and a thin arm. We were all struck with great wonder and pity, to see so much cruelty and so strange a thing such as we had never seen nor heard of; for although many people had seen Indians eating human flesh, yet no one had ever heard of them offering it to anybody. When the Indians saw that we were astonished, they came to us to tell us to eat it. And some of the soldiers wished to fire on them, but the General prevented them saying that those people did not know good from evil, and the soldiers answered that they knew it right well, because they went away from their own lands to look for other Indians to eat. And the General appeased them saying: "Christian brethren, it is for this reason that before we make

war on them we should show them that they ought not to do these deeds; until then, all the harm that we shall do them would be upon our own consciences." He then ordered them to bury the human quarters and directed all to stand aside so that the Indians might see it. And after they had dug a hole, he ordered a negro to hold up the piece in his hand and turning towards them, to show it to them. And they all saw what we had done, and cried out *teo nalea*, that is to say, that we did not eat it. They were standing so near that our men heard them, and forthwith we buried the piece before them all, to which they paid great heed. When they saw what we had done, they went away with an aggrieved look, bending low over their canoes.'

At the beginning of April, the brigantine was launched. It was a serviceable, undecked craft, stout enough to carry a small culverin together with thirty men with their arms and equipment. It returned in due course from its reconnaissance to report the existence of a great archipelago lying to the east and made up of islands 'of pleasant aspect, neither too low nor too mountainous, well-populated and abounding in food'. The largest of these islands was called Gaumbata by the natives and Guadalcanal by the Spaniards. It was ruled by a *tauriqui* called Mano who gave the Spaniards a friendly reception and made no attempt to interfere with them when they landed to raise a cross and take possession of the island in the customary manner.

The next day, however, the Spaniards observed with indignation that the natives had pulled down the cross which had been so piously erected and were attempting to carry it off. Mendaña, whose faith in a policy of kindly treatment of the natives was now beginning to wane, despatched Sarmiento with a company of arquebusiers and shield-bearers to see what was afoot, and to chastise the idolaters if they persisted in their arts of sacrilege. Sarmiento found that the natives had already, perhaps in superstitious dread, repented themselves of their

rashness and attempted to put back the cross. But they had found it too heavy, and left it lying on the ground. The Spaniards raised it reverently into position once more and returned to the ships.

Guadalcanal appeared to the Spaniards to be the biggest island and the most suitable for colonisation which they had yet encountered. The natives were inquisitive but not unfriendly, and lived in large and numerous settlements surrounded by well-tended plantations. It remained to be discovered whether the land had the supreme virtue of proving auriferous. The natives, it was observed with disappointment, wore no ornaments of gold, but the practised eye of the Spaniards detected in the configuration of the countryside a 'great disposition for gold' which filled them with high hopes. Once again Sarmiento was ordered to lead a party of men into the interior in search of gold and food.

The advance of a body of well-armed strangers into the heart of the country filled the natives, not unnaturally, with panic. They fled at the approach of the Spaniards who found the experience of entering village after village without a living soul a sinister and eerie one. The need of commandeering large quantities of food was growing increasingly urgent, and nothing but a few coconuts and forgotten scraps were to be had from the settlements. The sense of being isolated in the heart of an unseen and hostile population made the Spaniards grow more and more jumpy, so that they imagined fell designs in the most innocent of actions. Catoira relates that when Sarmiento's party came to a large village which, as usual, they found abandoned, and started to pillage the houses, the Indians, hoping perhaps to pacify them and prevent their homes from being burnt to the ground, came forward bearing bundles of firewood, and made as if to offer them for fuel. But the Spaniards immediately suspected them of concealing arms beneath the branches and of planning to launch a treacherous assault on

them once they came within striking distance. 'One Indian,' Catoira relates, 'actually came up to feel the legs of a soldier who stood there, as if to test whether they were tender for eating.'

Sarmiento returned from his expedition with his troop intact but with little accomplished. No certain proof of gold had been found, for the flow of water in the river had been too swift and the attitude of the natives too ambiguous to allow the gold-diggers to work undisturbed. But some of them claimed to have detected grains of gold amongst the sand.

The natives' attack, when at length it did come, was launched not against the ever vigilant Sarmiento, but against a band of ten Spaniards who had ventured carelessly ashore and were promptly massacred, all except one who escaped to bring the woeful news, and their mutilated bodies left strewn upon the shore. The Indians taunted the Spaniards by waving flags made from the clothes of the murdered men. Mendaña now resolved that the natives should be taught a grim lesson. Sarmiento was despatched with orders to lead a punitive expedition, and for nine days his men roamed through the island, burning down villages and killing or capturing any savages they could lay hands on. The dismembered bodies were then displayed in reprisal near the spot where the massacre of the Spaniards had occurred and as a bloody reminder that the policy of friendship and forbearance had been abandoned in favour of the arbitrament of the sword. But the problem of securing supplies from a now thoroughly resentful and frightened population was more difficult than ever before. After a stay of forty days in Guadalcanal, the General decided to sail on and try his luck on one of the other islands reconnoitred by the brigantine, to which they gave the name of San Cristóbal.

The sequence of discovery and attempted possession by the Spaniards was now following a dishearteningly familiar pattern. The natives would show themselves inquisitive and

friendly, but as soon as the Spaniards, whose scruples diminished as their necessities increased, sought to requisition food, they would grow angry and hostile. Armed clashes became a matter of course, hindering the progress of exploration and reducing the prospects of ultimate colonisation to an unrealisable dream. Whilst the ships were being beached and careened, the General summoned a council of war to decide what should be done. Were they to press on with their exploration and choose a site for the foundation of a colony, or should they decide to abandon the venture and return to Peru? That was the grave question which had now to be settled.

The council was attended by the pilots, officers, and friars of the expedition, and by the more experienced sailors and soldiers, making a total of fifty-eight men in all, each being invited to give his own opinion. Hernán Gallego, the Chief Pilot, spoke out in forthright and convincing terms. The instructions which the Governor of Peru had given the expedition, he reminded his listeners, were to found a colony if suitable land was discovered. But was the land suitable? The natives, as they all knew well, were hostile and treacherous, and could only be held in check by the Spaniards' firearms. But the supplies of shot, powder, and matches were running low, and the locks of many arquebuses were defective. Peru was too far off to be able to send them supplies and reinforcements. Indeed, the rigging, cables, and the general condition of the ships had now deteriorated so badly that if they postponed their departure any longer, they would never reach the shores of Peru alive. And as a crowning argument the Chief Pilot recalled that no gold or silver or precious stones had been discovered to make it worth while to stay on in the island.

Pedro de Ortega, the Master of the Camp, and the friars then spoke. They too, were in favour of giving up the expedition and returning to Peru. They agreed with Gallego's arguments and reinforced them with new ones of their own. The

Governor, they declared, had been mistaken – or misinformed – as to the distance from Peru of the lands it was proposed to colonise. Had he known how far away they lay, he would never have ordered that a colony should be founded in so remote a spot. It would, indeed, be more prudent to give up all idea of sailing back to Peru and to set course instead for New Guinea and thence to Manila.

Only Sarmiento stoutly maintained that the Governor's instructions should be strictly carried out and that they should stay and colonise the islands. Their forces, he declared, were sufficient to overawe the Indians. Neither was he convinced that there were no precious metals to be found. Juan Moreno, a Lombard gold-miner, claimed to have found clear indications of gold, whilst another soldier, Martin Alonso by name, went so far as to aver that gold existed in great abundance. A handful of other soldiers gave their vote in favour of remaining and colonising the island, but the opinion of most was overwhelmingly in favour of immediate return. Mendaña himself, perhaps relieved at the prospect of terminating a responsibility which weighed heavily upon his young shoulders and eager to set eyes again on the bride who awaited him at home, readily endorsed the majority view and ordered that the expedition should make ready to sail for Peru. It was a fateful decision. Had the Spaniards founded a settlement, the brigantine would no doubt have continued its reconnaissance of the neighbouring isles, and sooner or later the trade winds would have carried her on until she struck the coast of Australia. Here, in latitudes where he little expected it, Sarmiento might have found the 'whole land-mass in whose quest I had set out'.

But this was not to be. On 11th August 1568, the expedition weighed anchor and headed across the Pacific. If we can believe Mendaña's narrative, the General deferred to Sarmiento's contention that there might be a chance of striking 'the great land' in which he believed, should they follow a south-easterly

course, and ultimately make a landfall somewhere on the coast of Chile. But the counsels of Gallego and the other pilots at length prevailed, the Line was crossed on 6th September, and a course set for California. Thereafter, so far out were the pilots in their reckoning, they daily expected to sight land.

On 17th September some atolls of the Marshall Group were sighted and christened the San Mateo shoals. Mendaña sent a boat ashore to reconnoitre and found an island deserted by the natives who had apparently taken to the sea in fear. In the villages they discovered food of a disagreeable taste, made from fermented pandanus fruit, and an intoxicating liquor of coconut juice which the natives had left to brew in a hole in the ground. Water the islanders apparently obtained by tapping the palm stems. But the strangest discovery of all was a sort of crude chisel made from an old iron nail. How, they wondered, did such an object find its way to this remote island? Had other ships and other men passed that way before them? To these questions they could find no answer, for the little island lay silent and abandoned by its terror-stricken inhabitants.

The ships continued on their course and on 2nd October discovered a lonely atoll to which they gave the name of San Francisco. San Francisco – or Wake Island, as we know it – proved a disappointing discovery, for the only vegetation consisted of stunted shrubs, and the island offered no opportunity of refilling their depleted watercasks. They still had nearly another 4,000 miles to go before making landfall.

Another misfortune was now upon them. On 16th October a terrible storm assaulted the two ships and scattered them. Sarmiento claims that the General, fearing that he would be denounced, when they got home, for having disregarded his instructions, took this opportunity of shaking off the *almiranta* in which Sarmiento was sailing. Mendaña, for his part, averred that Sarmiento deliberately separated from the *capitana* by an unauthorised change of course. Whatever the truth may have

been, the storm left the two vessels dismasted and crippled, and each struggled on valiantly across the endless waste of the ocean, the crews now suffering agonies of hunger, thirst, and despair.

In his extremity, Mendaña now gave unexpected proof of resolution and leadership. His men, driven to the verge of madness and mutiny, clamoured that the helm should be put round and that they should make for Manila. This, the General well knew, would be their destruction. Their only hope lay in holding to their course with courage and fortitude. As if to prove the wisdom of his words, a cool shower fell to relieve their thirst, and not long afterwards, a log, still green and fresh, was seen floating in the sea. A sailor leapt overboard and brought the log alongside where it was heaved on board and fashioned into a cross by the superstitious crew. A few days after this happy omen – on 19th December – land was sighted.

The expedition had reached Lower California, in the neighbourhood, it seems, of Point San Antonio. Coasting southwards and feasting on fish and fresh water, they reached the port of Colima where, three days later, to their amazement (for they had long since given her up for lost) they espied the battered *almiranta* approaching. The Spaniards' rejoicing at finding their comrades still alive was short lived, for the feud between Sarmiento and Mendaña now broke out once more with fresh fury. Sarmiento repaired to the magistrate to make a sworn statement indicting the General for the misconduct of the expedition. Mendaña countered by seizing and destroying all Sarmiento's papers, notes and charts. The expedition proceeded to Realejo in Nicaragua, where Sarmiento again attempted to lodge an official protest against the General, but was himself seized and placed under arrest. Shortly afterwards he escaped. Catoira the Purser records that 'he fled with a slave. They say he was set free by a priest of a mission who was named Diego Valenta, and the mission El Viejo. The General wished to take the priest before the Archbishop of Peru, and

issued a writ against the said Sarmiento, that he might be sent to Peru, where he has laid information against him.'

Sarmiento must have known that his indictment would meet with a cool reception in Lima so long as Mendaña's uncle, the Licendiado de Castro, was Governor there. He had almost decided to return to Spain and carry his quarrel before the King, when he received tidings which were to determine the future course of his life and mark the beginning of a new and fruitful association. His Majesty had been pleased to appoint Don Francisco de Toledo as the new Viceroy of Peru. This would mean the end of de Castro's influence and the probable eclipse of his nephew. Sarmiento determined to report to the new Viceroy without delay and place his person at his service and his grievances at his judgment-seat. Of what exactly passed when the General and his accuser were in due course confronted in the presence of the inflexible Toledo we have no record. It is clear however that the Viceroy's verdict went wholeheartedly in favour of Sarmiento whom he proceeded to entrust with a series of important and confidential missions, whilst the unfortunate Mendaña was to see his career blighted by the new Viceroy's displeasure. It is difficult not to have some sympathy with Sarmiento's youthful enemy. Whether he had been right or wrong in not attempting settlement on the islands discovered, his one overmastering desire was henceforth to sail thither again and colonise them. More than a quarter of a century was to elapse before he could make another attempt, and he lost his life before he could bring it to fruition.* In his singleness of purpose, and in the adverse fate which kept him from its achievement, his life was strangely shaped to the pattern of his rival's. But before that tragic climax of Sarmiento's career was reached, more than one curious and colourful chapter of his life remained to be written.

*A vivid fictional account of Mendaña's second voyage to the Solomon Islands is given in Robert Graves' *The Isles of Unwisdom* (London, 1950).

CHAPTER FOUR

THROUGH PERU WITH THE VICEROY

Don Francisco de Toledo, the newly appointed Viceroy, Governor, Captain-General and President of the Royal Audiencias, was at this time a grizzled soldier and administrator of fifty-four years of age, small and wiry of stature, bigoted, autocratic, and painstakingly conscientious, of unimpeachable integrity and inexhaustible energy. Between Sarmiento and such a man there must have existed an immediate affinity. The Viceroy landed at Nombre de Dios on the Isthmus of Panama, and remained there for nearly three months overhauling the local administration before continuing on his way to Lima. In all probability, Sarmiento joined him there and accompanied him to Peru as a member of his entourage. Here we may leave him, whilst we allow ourselves a glance at the state of Peru, and of Lima and Cuzco, its two chief cities, at the time of the new Viceroy's arrival.

The viceregal capital, which Toledo entered on 30th November, had been founded by Francisco Pizarro, the conqueror of Peru, as a more accessible alternative to the remote and ancient Inca capital of Cuzco high up on the Andean plateau. The site which he had chosen for the new city was the smiling valley of Rimac, a name which the Spaniards soon corrupted into Lima. Since the founding had taken place on the Feast of Epiphany, it was more often referred to as the City of the Kings. A lovelier setting could hardly be imagined. On all sides lay orchards bearing figs, pears, quince, and pomegranates,

orange groves and banana plantations heavy with fruit, vines already acclimatised and richly thriving beneath a subtropical sun. Gardens fragrant with jasmine and honeysuckle stretched to the very heart of the city, all but hiding the wretched hutments on the outskirts where the Indians dwelt, and giving an air of freshness and gaiety to the otherwise rather austere one-storied houses of which the greater part of the town was as yet composed. Only a few of the very richest Spaniards could boast a house built of stone, though most took pride in embellishing the façades of their homes with windows and balconies of rare and elaborately carved wood, where one could sit in the heat of summer and enjoy the cool breeze from the coast. But the streets were still unpaved, and the clouds of dust thrown up by the cantering horses would send the fair ladies of Lima coughing and spluttering back from their gazebos, or keep them confined to their chambers with chronic asthma.

The City of the Kings was laid out in the traditional Spanish chess-board pattern; the blocks of houses were separated by straight streets running parallel or intersecting each other at right-angles. The central block was left free to form the main square or plaza, and round it were grouped the chief buildings of the city and the characteristic emblems of Spanish rule; the Cathedral, the Municipality, the palaces of the Viceroy and of the Archbishop, and the city gaol. In the centre of the square, the gaunt framework of the gallows rose as a warning to any who might think to flout the authority of the King or his officers. Peru was now nominally conquered and pacified; the Incas, except for a handful who still held out precariously in remote mountains, had been crushed, and the ensuing civil wars amongst the conquistadores at length stamped out. But the spirit of turbulence was never exorcised for long, and the gallows served as a wholesome if grisly signpost to the path of civic virtue.

From the plaza radiated eight streets, each selling its charac-

BVENGOBIERNO D^oFRAN^{co}DE TOLEDO

mayor domo de sumatg 9

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Don Francisco de Toledo gouerno des^{bizo may 4} seel año de mill y quinientos
tenta y ocha el mes de julio del año de mill y quinientos por
a y una en el mes de febrero de 1560. Sea visto.

The Viceroy, Don Francisco de Toledo, from a drawing by Poma de Ayala.

teristic merchandise; Ropavejeros, where the old-clothes dealers had their booths, Mantas and Plateros, much frequented by ladies eager to see the latest fashions in fine attire and costly adornments, and the others. The City of the Kings – so it must have seemed to young Sarmiento – should more aptly have been termed the City of Queens, for its fair inhabitants had already begun to show that love of elegance and finery for which they were to become famous, and which later monarchs were to try in vain to curb by the enactment of sumptuary laws exacting fines resignedly paid by husbands as a tribute to the tyranny of changing fashion. The art of gorgeous and costly dress was indeed the only art understood and practised in early viceregal Lima, and its cult nourished a multitude of shops selling silks, laces, and brocades, gloves and mantillas, beautiful ornaments of gold and silver on which Indian craftsmen lavished their traditional skill to win the favour of their new masters. The aristocracy consisted, in addition to the officials of the *audiencia*, the viceregal court, and the dignitaries of the Church, of the thirty-two *vecinos*, or Spaniards to whom *encomiendas* of Indians had been given in the surrounding countryside. Some 2,500 *moradores*, or Spaniards without Indians, together with their families, their mestizo children and servants, and the ever increasing swarms of priests, the negro slaves, and the nameless, unregarded native Indians, made up the rest of the city's population. It was a thrusting, turbulent, shifting society, swollen periodically by the arrival of fresh adventurers from Spain, grasping, ambitious ne'er-do-wells, for the most part, attracted by reports of the fabled gold of Peru and thinking to find there wealth and positions far beyond their reach or their deserts in Europe.

The arrival of a new Viceroy was always the pretext for the public rejoicings, festivities, and ceremonies dear to the heart of Spaniard and Indian alike. But Toledo's coming, it was sensed, meant something more. It marked the re-affirmation of

the royal power in a land but recently and imperfectly subdued, where the feuds of turbulent conquistadores, the difficulty and remoteness of the terrain, and the brief or ineffective rule of former mandatories had brought society dangerously near to anarchy. The difficulty was that the richer and more influential sections of the community all had a stake of one sort or another in the continuance of this disorder. The *encomenderos*, remote and all-powerful on their great estates, snapped their fingers at royal ordinances, and extracted as much toil and tribute as they could from the Indians who, under their Inca rulers, had formed settled agricultural communities but were now hopelessly disrupted and scattered as a result of the Spanish conquest and the civil wars. The Church itself had largely lost its missionary ardour in its eagerness to share the good fortune of the great landowners, and many of the country priests looked upon their parishes as a means of getting rich as quickly as possible before returning to Spain. Even the *oidores*, the learned judges who composed the supreme tribunal of the *audiencia* which the King had set up to advise and if necessary to curb the arbitrary power of the Viceroy, stood to gain by the impoverishment of the Indians. Following the break-down of the old Inca land system and traditional law, the wretched Indians had begun to flounder in a welter of litigation which proved as ruinous to them as it was profitable to the multitude of lawyers and officials who formed the *audiencia's* motley fringe.

Though the Viceroy's coming undoubtedly heralded a determined battle with all these powerful interests, he was received with every show of magnificence and loyal respect. As November 1569 drew to its close, the inhabitants of Lima turned out to give their traditional welcome. The whole countryside indeed wore an air of gay and festive rejoicing, for it was spring-time, and the fresh breezes from the sea mingled with the warmer, listless air of the valleys, and seemed to

whisper a message of promise and expectation for the days which lay ahead. A magnificent arab steed had been sent out from the city. Thus, freshly mounted, the Viceroy made his solemn entry, erect and resolute despite his grey hairs and his fifty-four years, beneath the garlands of flowers and messages of welcome which adorned the way leading to the City of the Kings. The timorous Governor, the Licendiado de Castro, had been amongst the first to greet him, relieved that the responsibilities and perils of office had been lifted from him, thus leaving him free to seek a secure and affluent retirement in Spain. The first salutations over, the cortège moved solemnly past the gaily bedecked houses towards the plaza major. First came a Captain, escorted by the *alcaldes* and *regidores* of the city; then the Viceroy and his suite, accompanied by a great throng of nobles, pages, the chief citizens of Lima, and the representatives of the religious orders. Lastly came the mace-bearers, followed by the *oidores* and the officials of the *audiencia*. At the steps of the Cathedral in the plaza major the Archbishop – Sarmiento's old enemy – was waiting to receive the representative of the King and to exchange the solemn compliments which the occasion demanded. Prelate and Viceroy knelt in prayer together before the altar. Then the Viceroy withdrew to his residence to rest from the fatigue of the journey and to prepare himself for the fresh exertions which awaited him.

The Viceroy's piety was of that intense and narrow sort which seldom prevented the Spanish official from dealing roughly with ecclesiastics when occasion arose. The Church, he clearly saw, was to be his chief ally in the work of reconstruction and regeneration. But first it must be purged of its pretensions and encroachments upon the royal power. The right of patronage, which had been one of the most cherished royal prerogatives in Spain but which had been allowed to slip into the hands of the Archbishop of Lima, had to be restored to the Crown. The influence of the orders must be held in check,

BUEN GOBIERNO PRINCIDENTE IDO



The Viceroy of Peru conferring with the officials of the *Audiencia Real*,
after a drawing by Poma de Ayala.

and, in particular, the University removed from their exclusive control. The clergy as a whole had to be reminded of their duties to convert and instruct the native population, and the Inquisition, hitherto conducted somewhat haphazardly by the Archbishop, had to be established on a formal basis for the protection of morality and doctrine. These measures, which were pressed home with the Viceroy's habitual vigour and might well have been expected to arouse the bitter enmity of the Church, were tempered with a subtle flattery which gradually won him its full support. Toledo realised the invaluable insight which the church had acquired into the innumerable problems which beset his administration of Peru. He therefore made a point of never embarking on any important scheme or reform without first seeking the counsel of the Church and thus drawing its leaders gradually and imperceptibly into his own designs.

The secular authorities proved less tractable. Thanks to its greater degree of permanence, and the many ties which linked the *oidores* to the powerful landowning interests, the *audiencia* had been acquiring an altogether disproportionate authority, which it was determined not to surrender to the Viceroy. Throughout the greater part of his long administration, Toledo was to find himself in perpetual disagreement with his *audiencia*, whose members did not stop at sabotaging his every measure and seeking to undermine the Crown's confidence in him by promoting intrigues in the court and in the Council of the Indies. The hostility of the Lima *audiencia* was made all the more serious by the fact that the Viceroy had decided to absent himself for long periods from his capital whilst he visited other parts of his far-flung domains.

Toledo had brought with him detailed instructions from the King regarding the purpose and scope of the grand visitation which he was to carry out in Peru. Other governors and viceroys had tried to administer the country from their palaces in

Lima, without having any clear idea of the state of the country or of the nature of the many problems involved, and without being able to ensure that such edicts as they saw fit to issue were really observed. The King was naturally interested in ascertaining as accurately as possible how much the fabled land of gold could really provide in yearly tribute. He was no less genuinely bent on preventing the arbitrary exploitation and oppression of the Indians by instructing his Viceroy to take steps 'against the *encomenderos*, *caciques*, chiefs and others who have been imposing excessive taxation and are guilty of maltreating and oppressing them in any way, and to take measures against them and make inquiry, ascertaining the truth, punishing the guilty and settling the lawsuits between Indians, both those now beginning and those pending before the courts'. The scattered Indian population was to be regrouped in fixed settlements, and their spiritual care entrusted to zealous priests. Churches, monasteries, and orphanages were to be established where most needed. Data was to be assembled regarding the number of Indians in each district, the nature of the crops, trees and other products, common lands, cattle, mines, the state of the roads and bridges, and a host of other matters. Historical information was also to be sought regarding the history of the ancient Inca empire, its structure and administration, and above all, the appointment and succession of the local chieftains and the methods by which the Incas had established their sway. To these latter questions, seemingly of little practical relevance, the Viceroy attached the greatest importance for reasons which we shall consider later. It was here that the intrepid navigator and imprudent astrologer, Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa, was to show his worth as historian and man of letters.

In October 1570, less than one year after his state entry into Lima, the Viceroy set out on the general visitation of his domains which was to last five full years. His entourage had

been chosen with care from amongst the most learned and trustworthy Spaniards in Peru. He took with him Gerónimo Pacheco, Juan Soto, and Francisco de Barrasa y Cardenas, as his personal advisors, Pedro Sarmiento as his cosmographer or surveyor, a nephew, two secretaries and two accountants, a learned naturalist and doctor, two friars and three interpreters, one of whom was to suffer a fate in his old age which casts a sombre light on some aspects of the celebrated visitation. The party was escorted by a guard of twenty lancers and ten mounted arquebusiers under the command of tried captains, and was preceded by the Doctor Loarte, the judicial assessor, who went ahead to prepare the way. Impressive as this cortège was, it must have seemed a modest enough affair to those who could remember the mighty train of nobles, officials, servants and warriors which used to escort the Inca, borne by a score or more of Indian carriers on his golden litter, in stately procession through his realms.

The first halt on the long journey was made at Jauja, in the pleasant valley where Pizarro's men had made one of their earliest settlements. In bygone times it had been peopled by a tribe of Indians called the Huancas, known for their ferocity in warfare and for their custom of flaying the skins off their captives which they then used to make into war-drums or stuffed with ashes and hung in their temples. The Huancas used to live in small but well-fortified settlements, for they were constantly fighting amongst themselves. If we are to believe Garcilasso de la Vega, they regarded dogs as their sacred beasts, feasted solemnly off their flesh and made strange wind instruments out of their skulls. The Incas had subdued them and converted them to the worship of the sun, but had allowed them to preserve the use of their canine instruments on feast days. It was at Jauja that the luckless Inca prince Huascar had been held prisoner by his half-brother Atahualpa and obtained an audience of Pizarro's envoys without succeeding in making them

understand the reasons for his plight or securing any promise of support against his rival.

The Viceroy's party stopped for four days at Jauja where the judicial assessor reviewed the numerous law-suits pending between the Indians (litigation having proved the best substitute for their ancient feuds) and put a summary end to many of them by publicly burning the documents, whilst the Viceroy overhauled the local administration and cross-examined a number of venerable Indians as to the nature and origin of Inca rule. The cortège then set out along the ancient Inca highroad leading to Huamanca and the capital.

Sarmiento was already familiar with these renowned roads, built of closely-joined blocks of stone, or hewn from the living rock in the form of an endless flight of steps (for the Indians did not know the use of the wheel and their roads were not built for carts or carriages) which twisted and turned their way over the almost inaccessible passes of the Cordillera and dropped away again to the sheltered valleys or bare plateaux between. He could still observe the *apachitas* or cairns of stones deposited by the Indians as thank-offerings where the road had been steepest, and, every quarter of a league or so, the walls of the wayside shelters where the fleet-footed *chasquis* had waited to speed the commands of the Inca on their way. In the loftiest parts, the Indians had built platforms or terraces where the carriers could rest and the Inca pause to contemplate the vast panorama of crags and peaks stretching away towards the misty limits of his empire. The main highway connecting Cuzco with Quito was said to have been built by Huaina Capac after his conquest of the latter province. It was matched by a road running parallel to it across the flat desert lands of the coast, but many of the wooden stakes which had been driven into the sandy ground had been pulled up by the Spaniards and used as fuel. The highway over the Cordillera was of more durable construction. Only the bridges, made from



Indians extracting ore from a mine.

thick ropes of twisted creeper, had suffered heavily in the wars and stood in need of frequent replacement. Yet some Spaniards, out of sheer bravado, would cross them at full gallop, sending bridge, beast and rider swaying dizzily over the deep mountain gorges.

The town of Huamanja, where the cavalcade next stopped, possessed considerable economic importance on account of its famed mercury mines. Under the Incas, the Indians had indeed known of the existence of mercury but had held it in great awe as imbued with a mysterious and frightening life of its own. The Spaniards could only exploit the mines by the use of forced labour. True to his policy of taking no controversial measures without first sounding the opinion of the Church, Toledo had previously consulted a council of ecclesiastics in Lima as to the propriety of sanctioning this forced labour.

Royal instructions established the principle that the Indians were to offer their labour in return for just payment. None however, if left to their own desires, would choose the arduous and dangerous toil of the mines, and if the latter were to be kept in production, some degree of coercion would be essential. The Viceroy therefore endorsed the practice of forced labour but, in the teeth of violent opposition from the Spanish mine-owners who protested that they were being ruined, he enacted a series of measures designed to mitigate the Indians' lot. Their working day was to start one hour and a half after sunrise and was to continue until sunset, leaving one hour free at midday for lunch. They were to work for only four months every year, being at liberty at other times to cultivate their own land without interference. Reasonable wages were to be paid them whilst working in mines, and special officials were appointed to ensure that the regulations were observed.

The Viceroy and his party then pushed on across the plateau towards Cuzco. On their left rose the wild range of the Vilcampa mountains where unsubdued Indians still stood guard over the dispossessed heirs of the Inca empire. Huamanja itself was sometimes known as San Juan de la Frontera, for it stood at the frontier of the lands occupied by the Spaniards, and the first conquistadores had entered it on the feast of Saint John. From time to time, the Indians would descend from the mountains to rob those travelling along the high-road. But now there was little to fear from such sorties. The troop of lancers and mounted arquebusiers escorting the Viceroy would make short work of marauders.

South of Huamanja, the half-way house between Lima and Cuzco, the road swept eastwards to the ancient *tumbos* of Vilca and Pina. These *tumbos* were staging-posts which the Incas had constructed at intervals along the roads to provide food, fuel and lodging for those travelling on official business. This admirable system had broken down under the strain imposed by

the demands of the numerous Spaniards, travelling on business of their own, who not only exacted food and accommodation, but pressed the Indian *tumbo*-keepers into their service as carriers without thought of payment. Here was another valuable Inca institution which must be saved from destruction. Toledo issued orders that the *tumbos* were to be maintained by Indian labour on a moderate rota system, as in the mines, and that travellers were to pay for the services received there and were on no account to impress the keepers as carriers. The local authorities in each district were charged with seeing that these instructions were carried out and with the general upkeep of the *tumbos*.

In the broad vale of Siquillapampa, but a few leagues from the city of Cuzco, Spaniards and Indians had assembled from far and near to stage a welcome worthy of the ancient capital. The Viceroy was first escorted to a platform whence he might view the scene at his ease. Then, to the blare of trumpets and the roll of drums, a hundred splendidly mounted and accoutred Spaniards rode forth to clear a space in the midst of the dense throng of Indians and mestizos. An improvised ring was formed and bulls led forth to be baited and fought in traditional Spanish style. Then the Indians were allowed their turn. Down from the hillside they streamed, past the viceregal dais, in brilliant, endlessly varied procession, led by princes of the Inca household and representatives of the four *suyos* or ancient divisions of the empire, each with their own emblems and a great display of pennants. These nobles, and many of the multitude which followed them, were adorned with head-dresses made from the skins of lions, bears, and foxes, or from the plumage of the condor, according to the fable of the origin of their respective tribe. Some wore breastplates of beaten gold and silver which gleamed dazzlingly in the clear mountain sunshine. As they came before the Viceroy, each made obeisance after the manner of his people, and uttered a few words of welcome,

then passed on to make room for the dancers and warriors who clashed together in mock battle.

The splendid pageantry of the scene conjured up to Sarmiento's mind the triumphs of the great Inca emperors returning from some fresh conquest with spoils and captive kings amidst the rejoicings of their people. The symbols of that once formidable military power could be seen in the ruins of the mighty strongholds built from gigantic blocks of stone placed together with a precision which excited the wonder of the Spaniards, guarding the approaches to the capital at Ollantay-Tambo, Pisac, Pucara, Krenko, and – towering over the city itself in its triple-terraced grandeur – Sacsahuaman. Within this ring of fortresses, cradled by the still mightier amphitheatre of the great Andean peaks, the Incas had built the capital of their empire.

At the outskirts of Cuzco, the Viceroy mounted a fresh roan steed adorned with black trappings fringed with gold. The city elders waited upon him with the request that he should swear the traditional oath pledging him to respect the established privileges of the city. 'I shall do and perform whatsoever I deem to be in the service of our Lord the King,' he declared, and the elders were obliged to content themselves with this cryptic reply. The gates of the city were then thrown open, the 800 Spanish infantrymen lining the streets of Cuzco discharged their arquebuses in solemn salute, the trumpeters sounded a gay fanfare and the Viceroy rode on between cheering crowds of Indians and mestizos and beneath the curious gaze of ladies crowding balconies hung with coloured cloths and precious tapestries.

Cuzco was once again enjoying a wealth and prosperity scarcely inferior to those which it had once known in the heyday of the empire. The city had been in great part rebuilt by the Spaniards after the destruction wrought thirty-six years before in the great rebellion of the Inca Manco, when the

Indians had sent showers of fire-arrows to set ablaze the thatched roofs of the houses and smoke out their enemies. Only the buildings which they held most sacred had been spared from the flames; the sun temple, whose halls had now become the monastery of Santo Domingo, the house reserved for the *Acclahuasi* or Virgins of the Sun, and four of the royal palaces; Casana, once the home of the Inca Pachacuti, *Amarucancha*, with its lofty round tower, and the old palaces of *Huaina Capac* and the Inca *Viracocha*. Of the latter building the Spaniards had made their last stronghold, and try as they might, the Indians were unable to set it ablaze. This providential circumstance came later to be regarded as a miracle and imparted special sanctity to the Cathedral which the Spaniards built within its walls. There were those who claimed to have seen the Blessed Virgin, bearing the Infant Jesus in her arms, hovering in the air and quenching the flames which threatened to devour the Spaniards' refuge. St James too had intervened in the battle, flourishing a sword like a ray of lightning – a miracle which the Viceroy and his suite could now see depicted in a large painting.

As the Incas had reared their own buildings on foundations left by more ancient civilisations, so the Spaniards were now rebuilding the city on the ruins of pagan grandeur. Much of the edifices which had survived the flames had been pulled down to widen the streets and to provide material for churches and houses, and what was too stout to be demolished could at least be built over. Throughout the city, now enriched by the silver which flowed from the mines of Potosí, great pieces of masonry still survived like outcrops of some primary rock, their austerity relieved here and there by the emblazoned porticoes and grilled windows dear to the Spaniards.

The Viceroy and his suite rode slowly round the great plaza, doffing their plumed hats to the ladies on the balconies before entering the Cathedral for a thanksgiving mass. That night, the festivities which had begun two weeks before the Viceroy's

arrival reached a tumultuous climax, and for days afterwards Cuzco gave itself up to all manner of lavish and ingenious displays. In the great square, where the Incas had held their festivals in honour of the sun-god, pouring out their libations from a golden cup as the fiery orb rose over the rim of the mountains, or bearing in solemn, rythmical procession the great chain of beaten gold which Huaina Capac had ordered to be made and the conquistadores had long searched for in vain, a different if scarcely less fabulous scene was now staged. In the centre, a Moorish castle had miraculously appeared, surrounded by a forest of real trees amongst which birds and beasts of every description had been loosed, or the dangerous ones made fast to the branches. There were monkeys, tapirs, and armadilloes, bears, tigers and pumas; gaudily-hued parrots, macaws, and ducks mingled together their notes of colour and discordant song. At the edge of this enchanted forest played a fountain to whose waters beautiful village maidens came to fill their pitchers. Suddenly the Moors sallied out from their castle and carried off the girls. This was the signal for the Christian knights to ride forth and after many valorous mock conflicts release the fair captives.

The Viceroy did not deem himself too old to take part in this elaborate tourney. Indeed, there were others more venerable than he, for the surviving members of Pizarro's first band of conquistadores came forth to give one last display of their prowess. The steed on which the Viceroy was mounted aroused universal admiration. It was a dark chestnut with a magnificent tail and snow-white markings on its forehead and feet. After running three courses, the Viceroy withdrew to watch the proceedings from a balcony. Some of the cavaliers were arrayed in the most grotesque fancy-dress. There were ferocious demons who tilted at each other with infernal delight; a lad adorned with a bishop's mitre who dispensed benedictions from the back of a mule; sheep, dressed up with frills

round their necks to look like choristers, which bleated loudly every time their leads were jerked. When knights and on-lookers had had their fill of these diversions, a fierce bull was loosed. It rushed in amongst the trees and engaged a tiger in furious but inconclusive combat until enticed out again into the square where the baiting continued until darkness put an end to the sport. Captain Baltasar de Ocampo, a worthy cavalier who took part in these celebrations and has left us a detailed description of them, tells us that so great was the public excitement that 'for a long time people could talk of nothing else'.

Don Francisco de Toledo, however, was soon back to his labours. His first step was to impose his authority upon the city elders and the powerful *encomenderos* of Cuzco. The latter had gradually usurped the privilege of electing both of the city's two magistrates, although the royal ordinances clearly laid it down that one of these must be elected by the *moradores* or landless Spanish citizens. So long as the wealthy *encomenderos* retained this monopoly of the judiciary, no Spaniard of modest means was likely to find satisfaction at law. Toledo sternly reminded the City Council of its duty. The Council demurred, grew stubborn almost to the point of revolt, and the Viceroy had to make a show of his soldiers and threaten the city elders with exile to Chile, before they sullenly agreed to let the *moradores* elect their own magistrate.

The City Council once reduced to submission, the Viceroy next set about grappling with the more weighty problems of his Indian subjects. He remained in Cuzco for more than a year and a half drawing up the impressive body of legislation which was long to outlast his period of office and constitute one of Spain's most notable and enlightened attempts to incorporate her Indian subjects into the life of the imperial community. Some of the problems he had already encountered and attempted to solve on the long and tiring journey from Lima; the

conversion of the neglected *tumbos* into a regular staging service for travellers, the scrutiny of the title-deeds to land, and the regulation of labour conditions in the mines. Other problems, such as the provision of a better water-supply for the city, were peculiar to Cuzco, or called for further detailed investigation by experts. Such was the problem of the Indians' addiction to the *coca* drug, the leaves of which plant they were given to chewing in order, it was affirmed, to increase the physical endurance of the body strained by the high altitude of the Andean plateau. Toledo sent a doctor to examine the question in those areas where the habit was most widespread. If its cure was beyond the scope of the rudimentary medical knowledge of those days, there is little cause for wonder. The grip which this habit has had upon the population of Peru is attested by the scenes depicted on ancient pre-Inca pottery, and its effective treatment still defies medical and social science to this day.

The most fundamental problem of all was how to provide the subject Indians with the basis for a new social and economic stability. Under the rule of the Incas they had lived in one of the most orderly and carefully regulated societies which the world has ever seen. The social position and type of labour was decided for each child at birth, and he would live and die in the same community, and the same locality, without being permitted to stir beyond it unless called up for service in the Inca's armies or selected for special duties as a *chasqui*. The civil wars between Atahualpa and Huascar and the sudden devastating Spanish conquest had destroyed the old system without as yet substituting anything permanent in its place. The Indian communities, bewildered and leaderless, had deserted their homesteads to avoid the depredations of the Spaniards and the risk of forced labour on the estates or in the mines of their new masters. The civil wars of the Spaniards had increased the confusion; nor, once these were ended, had the *encomenderos* much incentive to promote the re-establishment of stable

Indian communities, for the scattered, defenceless Indians constituted a vast pool of free labour, into which they could dip at will with the right of the stronger. Royal ordinances had frequently defined the obligations of the *encomenderos* for the good treatment of the Indians and their education in the ways of civilisation and the Catholic faith. But for the most part such ordinances had been ignored; it needed the iron resolution of Toledo to achieve their enforcement and to re-settle the vagrant Indian population in new villages or reductions under the spiritual care of a priest. In the course of time, the Viceroy recovered from the Spanish *encomenderos* and native chieftains those lands which had once been reserved as the property of the Inca rulers or of the priests of the sun, and made them over in great part for the communal use of the Indians.

But even with the foundation of these new settlements and the curbing of the arbitrary power of the *encomenderos* there remained one important obstacle to the pacification of the land. The Indians continued to whisper to each other that somewhere in the fastness of the Vilcapampa mountains the lawful descendants of the Incas lived on, surrounded by a handful of loyal and resolute men; there the ancient rites and traditions of their race were preserved, the sun was still worshipped in splendid temples, and the embalmed bodies of the dead Incas adored. In the fulness of time, when the omens were propitious, the Inca would give the signal for the whole population to rise and massacre their white oppressors and restore the mighty empire of the past. These ominous murmurings had come to the ears of the Viceroy, but before we tell of how he resolved to silence them once and for all we must pause to consider the special task which he had entrusted to his cosmographer, Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE HISTORY OF THE INCAS

During the general visitation, Sarmiento had accompanied the Viceroy in the nominal capacity of cosmographer, but his duties included weightier tasks than the surveying of the mountains and valleys through which they passed. He was also concerned with recording and analysing the answers given by the local Indians to a series of questions which the Viceroy ordered to be put to them. These questions covered the following points. How was the district governed before the coming of the Incas, what tributes were paid and what allegiance owed? Were the chieftains chosen by the Indians, or did they impose their authority by force? How did they govern their districts, wage war on their neighbours, and hand on their succession? Which Inca established supremacy over the local chieftains and by what means? Was his rule accepted voluntarily or not? Did the local chieftains remain in power as regional rulers, or did the Incas replace them by their own nominees?

The answers given to these questions, though differing in detail, combined to give a clear enough outline of the essentials of Inca rule. The Indian tribes had originally lived under their local chieftains, either hereditary or elected, at various stages of civilisation, until the great Inca Tupac Yupanqui extended his conquests outwards from Cuzco, forcing or inducing them to subjection, removing the recalcitrant and confirming the acquiescent, and cementing the whole pyramidal structure by the appointment of officials in charge of every ten, hundred,

five hundred, and thousand Indians. Such was the broad picture which emerged from the scores of answers laboriously recorded by the Viceroy's secretaries to form, in the course of time, a massive body of documentation – a sort of census combined with the results of historical research, quiz, and Gallup poll – which the Viceroy later forwarded to the King of Spain under the name of *Informaciones*. This material was supplemented by four painted cloths showing the genealogical tree of the Incas, with likenesses of the Kings and Queens and their descendants, and pictures depicting the principal events in each reign, with the fables of the origin of the Incas shown on the borders. One cloth also included a map of Peru, for which Sarmiento had drawn compass lines indicating the positions of the towns. Together with these cloths and the *Informaciones*, Sarmiento's *History of the Incas*, based largely on the *Informaciones* but expanded by observations and researches of his own, was forwarded to the King.

The purpose of Sarmiento's *History*, as of the *Informaciones*, was frankly expressed in the Introduction to his work. It was to provide a 'sure and quiet haven for Your Majesty's conscience' in the dispute which had been raging as to the validity of the King of Spain's right of dominion in the New World. Echoes of this dispute, as we have seen, had already reached Sarmiento's ears on his way to Peru when he passed through the province of Chiapas where the bishop, Bartolomé de las Casas, had joined issue with the local *encomenderos* over their maltreatment of the Indians. Nor was Las Casas by any means alone in his denunciations. He had the support of powerful jurists and theologians in the Spanish court whose propositions had begun to trouble the conscience of the monarch himself. The most eminent jurist of the day, Father Vitoria, had devoted a learned work to the examination of Spain's titles to the Indies and had attached special importance to the question of whether the Indian rulers, whose dominions the Spaniards

acquired by conquest, had themselves been the *verdaderos dueños* – the true owners or natural lords of the lands in question. If they were not – if they themselves had been usurpers, upstarts and tyrants – then they could invoke no claim against the Spanish conquest which had at least brought with it the introduction of a higher civilisation and the proclamation of the true faith. Another justification claimed for the Spanish conquest was the abolition of unnatural practices such as cannibalism and sodomy.

These arguments were in the forefront of Sarmiento's mind when he took up his pen to compose the *History*. The development of Inca rule had to be shown as a succession of waves of conquest engulfing first one tribe of Indians, then another, until the whole far-flung empire was at length secured under the iron tyranny of the Incas. Such was the underlying thesis both of Sarmiento's *History* and of the Viceroy's *Informaciones*. Must we therefore regard the cross-examination of the innumerable Indian witnesses and the solemn swearing of their affidavits as an elaborate and pretentious farce, the conclusions drawn from them as a gigantic historical fake? Bias and exaggeration there undoubtedly were. One of the three official interpreters, Gonzalo Gomez Jimenez, confessed in his old age that he had deliberately falsified the testimony of some of the Indians to suit the Viceroy's wishes, but before he could set his name to a sworn statement to this effect, he was quietly done to death in prison. Yet if this falsification had indeed taken place on any considerable scale, we might well expect to find that the enemies of the Viceroy and his cosmographer – and they were many – would not have failed to charge them with it. Yet there is no record of this having occurred. Though the Indians may have tended to say, and the official scribes to record, the sort of thing which they judged the Viceroy would be pleased to hear, there can be little doubt that in its basic claim, Toledo's thesis was valid. Modern historical research has

confirmed that the Incas were a race of conquerors and gifted administrators who, after first consolidating their hold over the strategic centre of Cuzco, gradually pushed the frontiers of their empire outwards over the surrounding tribes until it came to embrace, as they boasted, *Tahuantinsuyu* – the four corners of the world. On this score, at least, they could lay no claim to being the *verdaderos dueños* of their vast domains. What ruling group in any mighty nation, for that matter, if its origins were too closely scrutinised, could do better? Where the Viceroy's thesis is clearly less tenable is in its denial of the positive achievements of Inca rule and of the fact that a large part of the population seems to have lived loyally and contentedly under it. It is ironical to reflect that his administration remains a memorable one precisely for his study of the ways of the Incas and his skill in framing his reforms so as to incorporate valuable elements in their traditional practice.

Sarmiento received little thanks for his ardent espousal of the Viceroy's thesis. We have no evidence that his *History* made much impression on the monarch to whom it was dedicated. Perhaps Philip never so much as glanced at it. The manuscript remained neglected until the end of the nineteenth century when it was re-discovered and published for the first time by a German scholar. The renown which Sarmiento had hoped to win as the historian of the Incas fell to another and more famous writer. How different is the vivid and idyllic panorama of Inca civilisation which we find in the *Comentarios Reales* of Garcilasso de la Vega! There we find, in frank antithesis to Sarmiento's contentions, the story of the benevolent, paternal and enlightened sway of the Incas, gradually accepted by willing and grateful barbarian tribes, anticipating in their just and benevolent laws, and in the sublimity of their worship of the sun, the civilisation and faith brought by the Spaniards. Garcilasso, who through his mother was himself of Inca descent, wrote his *Comentarios* in Spain, nearly thirty

years after Sarmiento's *History*. Perhaps they were intended as the answer, conceived with mature reflection and composed with inimitable artistry, to the thesis propounded by the Viceroy and his cosmographer.

In one respect, we must admit, Sarmiento was seriously out in his calculations. The 'inveterate tyranny of the Incas', he rather surprisingly assures us, persisted for close on one thousand years; to be precise, from AD 565 to 1533. We know now that Inca rule lasted for the relatively short period of only three or four centuries, and that it was erected on the ruins of probably more advanced civilisations. Its origin is still lost, as it was in Sarmiento's time, in a mist of conjectures and fables. But before he took up his pen to write of them, he paused to interpolate one of his own. Ever eager to vaunt his learning and familiarity with the classical authors, Sarmiento boldly asserted that the New World discovered and conquered by the Spaniards was in reality nothing less than a part of the lost Atlantis, and that its inhabitants were the descendants of 'Mesopotamians and Chaldaeans', who had originally populated that mythical continent of which Plato wrote. The cataclysm which had caused the disappearance of most of Atlantis had spared the western part of the vast continent, but the great ocean, which now rolled over what had once been fertile fields and populous cities, blotted out all knowledge and remembrance of the surviving land-mass - until Columbus re-discovered it for Europe. Sarmiento deemed it possible that earlier adventurers might have chanced on the lost continent before Columbus, but if so, none ever returned to tell the tale. Tradition had it that the aged Ulysses had sailed on and on towards the setting sun and reached an unknown land amongst whose inhabitants his weary mariners made their home. This was a story Sarmiento was ready enough to believe. He had been in Mexico and noticed - or at least imagined - that the Indians there resembled the ancient Greeks both in

their dress and in their bearing, and that they spoke of God as *Theos* and used other Greek words and letters in their language. Such things confirmed him in his persuasion that America was really the surviving portion of lost Atlantis.

Furthermore, the legend of a great flood, which some Spaniards took to be the same as that described in the bible but Sarmiento preferred to think of as the disaster which had engulfed the eastern part of Atlantis, was still preserved in some form or other amongst the Indians of Peru.* The world and its inhabitants, they believed, had been created by one whom they called Viracocha or Pachacama or Pachayachachi. The first men and women then lived in darkness, for as yet neither the sun nor the moon nor the stars had been created. For some time they lived in peace and concord as had been commanded them; but in time they gave themselves up to pride and covetousness and other sins, so that Viracocha was moved to anger against them. So he turned them into stones and other objects and caused some to be swallowed up by the earth and others by the sea in a great flood. For seventy days and seventy nights the rain fell, so that all living things were drowned and only the figures of those who had been turned to stone remained as a warning. These were still to be seen in the curious rocks of Pucara, seventy leagues from Cuzco.

One or two men, the Indians added, were spared by Viracocha from perishing in the flood so that they could serve him and help to create a new race of men. To give his new creation a better chance, Viracocha decided to create the heavenly bodies. So, taking his servants with him, Viracocha went to the great lake of Titicaca and commanded that the sun and the moon and the stars should rise up into the sky and give light. Then one of Viracocha's servants, Taguapaca, by name, grew disobedient. To punish him, Viracocha ordered the

* The account of Inca legend and history which follows is Sarmiento's own. Different versions are given by Garcilasso and others.

others to tie his hands and feet and throw him into the lake, and he was carried away by the water blaspheming and crying out that one day he would return and seek his revenge. As a warning of what had been done in that place, Viracocha raised up a great mound by the side of the lake and repaired to the place which they call Tiahuanaco, and there took flat stones whereon he drew and carved the likeness of all the nations which he thought to create. This done, he ordered his servants to mark well the names of the nations and of the parts of the earth which they should inhabit. And he commanded that they should disperse in different directions, calling upon men and women to come forth and to people the earth. So the servants set out, crying as they went: 'Oh ye peoples and nations, hear and obey the word of Viracocha, who bids you come forth, multiply, and fill the earth.' Thus all the tribes which inhabit Peru came forth; some from lakes, others from springs, valleys, caves, or trees.

Other fables say that Viracocha accomplished his work of creation in Tiahuanaco, first forming men and women of gigantic stature but then deeming it unseemly that they should be larger than their creator (for he was of average height, of blonde hair and beard, and clad always in a long white robe) he turned them to stone and made others of normal size. They all spoke one tongue and lived in the great buildings in Tiahuanaco, whose ruins can still be seen to-day. But when at length they went their several ways through the world, they varied their speech, adding to it sounds from the language of the wild beasts, so that they who had once been kinsmen could no longer understand each other when they met again. And after they had dispersed through the world, Viracocha came to visit some of them in a place called Cacha. But the people mocked at his manner and attire and plotted to kill him. Then Viracocha, who knew their thoughts, called down fire from heaven to destroy them, but seeing their repentance, had com-

passion on them and let the fire consume a hill nearby instead. In support of this legend, the Indians would point out a certain hill where the rocks were so big that they could scarcely be loaded onto a cart, and yet light enough – after they had been ‘burnt up’ by Viracocha’s miraculous fire – for one man to pick up.

After these things, Viracocha went on his way until he reached the town of Urcos, six leagues to the south of Cuzco, where he was held in much reverence by the natives who made a great statue of gold in his honour – the same statue which afterwards fell to the share of Francisco Pizarro who valued it at some 17,000 pesos. And Viracocha journeyed on instructing the people whom he had created until he at length reached the equator where he was joined by his servants. Then he bade them farewell, warning them that a false prophet would return in his name, but that in the fulness of time, he himself would indeed come back to them. So saying, he and his servants were carried away over the sea, skimming over the surface of the waves like foam, until they were lost to view.* Years later, the disobedient servant who had been cast into Lake Titicaca in punishment did indeed reappear claiming to be Viracocha, but though he deceived men at first they soon paid him no further heed. But when the first Spaniards set foot in Peru, the Indians beheld their fair hair and long beards with awe, and told one another that the ancient prophecy had at length been fulfilled and that Viracocha and his servants had in truth returned to rule the land.

Such were the stories which the Indians told Sarmiento regarding the beginning of human life in their land. Have the researches of historians and archaeologists lifted more than a corner of this curtain of legend? Tiahuanaco, with its immense

* Sarmiento is undoubtedly giving a version of those legends which so intrigued Mr Thor Heyerdahl and led to the celebrated Kon-Tiki expedition across the Pacific in a primitive Peruvian raft.

and impressive ruins by the shores of Lake Titicaca, is now generally recognised to have been an important centre of pre-Incaic civilisation – the scene of Viracocha's creation, as the Indians believed – but who its ancient inhabitants were and how their city came to be built and abandoned remain as deep a mystery as in the times of the Spaniards and of the Incas before them. Nor do we know much more than Sarmiento as to what passed in the long centuries between the decline of Tiahuanaco and the coming of the Incas. There were other civilisations, it seems, at Nazca, Chimú and elsewhere which bloomed and faded, but the whole era is still largely one of conjecture and fable, and we may as well leave it to Sarmiento to take up the tale. He was probably near the truth when he warns us that the fables regarding the origin of the Incas were no doubt made up by the first of the dynasty, crafty and ambitious men, to impress the credulous natives with evidence of their miraculous coming and of their divine right to be accepted as lords of the land.

Some six leagues from Cuzco stands a hill called Tampu-tocco, which Sarmiento tells us means 'the house of windows'. Legend had it that from one of these openings or windows in the hillside, there came forth eight brothers and sisters calling themselves Incas or Lords, the chief of whom was one called Manco Capac. Gradually, by craft and conquest, four of the eight brethren gained the lordship of the valleys and founded a city which they called Cuzco. Manco Capac was succeeded by his son Sinchi Rocca and by his grandson Lloqui Yupanqui, of whose reigns Sarmiento has little to record. That they were historic and not fabulous personages there can be no doubt, for their embalmed bodies were later discovered by the Spaniards. The next Inca, Mayta Capac, was of violent and warlike disposition. His very birth was deemed miraculous, for though his father was so old as to be deemed impotent, his son was born lusty and with grown teeth. Tales are told of

how this Indian Hercules, when only two years of age, fought and seriously injured the sons of neighbouring chieftains who first attempted to kill him and later rose in general rebellion. Mayta Capac took command of his father's armies, defeated his enemies, and performed many other notable deeds during his reign.

The next two Incas, Capac Yupanqui and Rocca, were also great generals who extended the frontiers of their empire well beyond Cuzco. But the Inca Rocca, Sarmiento relates, gave up his life of conquest for an idle round of pleasures and banquets. He must have been a very human monarch for 'he loved his children so much that for their sake he neglected his duties towards his people and even towards himself'. The tribe of Ayamarcas was at enmity with the Inca Rocca, for he had married a native princess who had once been betrothed to their own chieftain. So in revenge the Ayamarcas kidnapped his son and would have killed him had not the lad started to shed tears of blood and prophesy that a terrible fate would befall them if they put him to death. The Ayamarcas were frightened at this portent and decided to send the boy away in the keeping of some shepherds, hoping that he would soon perish of hunger and want. There he remained, to the great grief of his father who knew nothing of his fate, until some Indians loyal to the Inca rescued him by a ruse and sent him back to Cuzco. Sarmiento tells us that this Inca, whose name means in their tongue 'Tears of Blood', was 'a man of gentle disposition and very handsome features'.

The next and eighth Inca took the name of Viracocha, since he claimed that that deity had appeared to him and promised great fortune for him and his descendants. His reign was one long succession of wars and conquests, but he finally grew old and feeble and when a formidable tribe called the Chancas marched on Cuzco, he abandoned the capital in panic and it would have been sacked had it not been for the bravery

of one of his sons, the Inca Yupanqui, who marched out against them and put them to flight. The young prince then forced his father to abdicate in his favour and in cruel memory of these things caused a painting to be made on the rocks overlooking the road along which his old father had fled from Cuzco, depicting two great condors – one of them cowering in terror, the other with beak and claws bared in fight. This painting was still there for the Spaniards to see, though in Sarmiento's time it had already begun to be defaced by the ravages of weather.

The Inca Yupanqui proved to be one of the greatest rulers of his dynasty. The Indians gave him the surname of Pachacuti, which means 'Reformer of the Universe', for not only did he undertake many great conquests, but enacted innumerable laws affecting every aspect of the life of his subjects and the organisation of the state administration. There was none to compare with him in legislative zeal until Francisco de Toledo began his great body of reforms, and Sarmiento had indeed heard the Indians refer to the Viceroy as 'a second Pachacuti' in remembrance of the great Inca. It was Pachacuti Inca Yupanqui who had embellished and rebuilt Cuzco and caused terraces to be made all up the mountain sides surrounding the valleys so that every available inch of land could be cultivated. Sarmiento, with his interest in the study of the stars, was specially impressed by the Inca's scientific achievements. To determine the exact time for the sowing and harvesting to be begun, he erected poles to serve as astrolabes and appointed wise men to guard and observe this royal sun-dial. He divided the calendar into twelve lunar months and called together the most venerable and trustworthy men in the country to record the great deeds of his Inca ancestors and to preserve them in painting and in their *quipus*. But above all, he lavished his attentions on the temples and sacred places of the land; first on the 'house of windows' at Tamputocco, whence his ancestors

were held to have come forth, then on the great temple of the sun in Cuzco, the remains of which were used by the Spaniards for the monastery of Santo Domingo. He died after a long and memorable reign - 'giving up his soul to the Devil', Sarmiento adds - and his body was embalmed and placed with full regalia before the image of the sun in the great temple. The Indians hid it in the outskirts of Cuzco before the coming of the Spaniards, and continued to hold it in great reverence, until it was discovered and sent to Lima by order of the Viceroy.

The life and exploits of the next Inca, Tupac Yupanqui, were also of special interest to Sarmiento. He it was who had led the Indian armies to the shores of the Pacific and even embarked them to undertake the conquest of two of the Galapagos Islands which Sarmiento had sighted on his voyage of discovery to the Solomon Islands. He had also ventured into the impenetrable forests on the eastern slopes of the Andes and pushed on towards the great Amazon river. One of his captains, it was reported, had even reached the sources of the mythical Paytiti which the Spaniards were beginning to believe was the home of El Dorado, lord of untold wealth of gold and precious gems. A number of Spanish expeditions had already striven to push through the forests in search of this promised land, and Sarmiento had studied and recorded them for the edification of the Viceroy. Years later, he was to tell these same tales to Sir Walter Raleigh and kindle his imagination with the wild dreams which spurred him on to his fateful and tragic quest in Guiana. Lastly, Tupac Yupanqui had led his armies over the Andes to the conquest of Chile, and had penetrated as far south as the banks of the river Maule. Many leagues beyond lay the great straits joining the Pacific and the Atlantic which Magellan was to discover and Sarmiento himself to attempt to fortify and colonise.

Huaina Capac, who succeeded Tupac Yupanqui, was the

CONQUISTA LEVÁTOSE PORREI-Í GA'MANCO INGA



Manco, the Inca who refused to submit to the conquistadores, on his throne.

last of the great Incas. Sarmiento tells us that he left behind him some fifty sons, and that on his death a dispute broke out between two of them, Huascar and Atahualpa, as to which had the right to the throne. The civil war which followed proved fatal to the Inca empire, for it left it weak and divided at the very moment that Pizarro and his fellow adventurers arrived. Atahualpa, who had defeated his brother, was curious to see the newcomers, for from the accounts which he had received of them, it seemed that they were gods or 'Viracochas' who had returned according to the ancient prophecy. So he let them proceed into the heart of his empire and received them into his presence. The dramatic story of what then happened is familiar. Pizarro seized the person of Atahualpa by an audacious coup and subsequently put him to death. Thus did the empire of the Incas pass to the Spaniards, for Atahualpa himself, Sarmiento is careful to point out, was but an illegitimate son and a usurper of the throne, whilst almost all the descendants of Huascar had already perished at the hands of their enemies. Another son of Huaina Capac and half-brother to Atahualpa and Huascar, the Inca Manco, led the great revolt of the Indians against the Spaniards and almost succeeded in driving them from Cuzco. He was dead now, but two sons of his were still preserving some sort of precarious independence in the mountains; but 'neither one nor the other', Sarmiento confidently concludes, 'is the heir of the land'.

Sarmiento put the finishing touches to the dedication of his *History* to King Philip II on 4th March 1572. By the beginning of the following May he was ready to take his place in the expedition which the Viceroy ordered to be sent into the mountains to secure the person of Tupac Amaru, son of Manco and the last Inca pretender, and to bring him dead or alive to face his trial in Cuzco.

CHAPTER SIX

THE LAST OF THE INCAS

Little more than a score of leagues to the north-west of Cuzco lay the wild and mountainous province of Vilcapampa dominated by the lofty Vilcacunca range but containing several fertile and beautiful valleys. It was bounded on the north by the still unexplored lands of the Manarics, and on the south-east and south-west by the two important affluents of the Amazon, the Apurimac and the Vilcamayu or Urubamba. Although relatively near the ancient capital, Vilcapampa long remained one of the most inaccessible parts of the Andes, for it was cut off from territory under Spanish control by formidable precipices and granite canyons, by steaming tropical forests and by passes themselves as lofty as the peaks of other mountain ranges.

Here, in the secret strongholds and sanctuaries such as Vitcos and Machu Pichu, whose ruins have only recently been brought to light, the Inca Manco sought shelter after the collapse of his great rebellion against the Spaniards. From the reports of his spies he followed the course of the fierce civil wars between the followers of Pizarro and Almagro. With the latter he had always been friendly, and even after Almagro had been put to death, the Inca Manco still kept in touch with his son, the young mestizo Diego de Almagro, and sent him large quantities of helmets, breastplates, lances, and other arms which the Indians had captured in the siege of Cuzco, to help him equip his army. After the Almagrists had been routed in the bloody battle of Chupas, Diego Mendez, Gomez Perez and other sur-

vivors managed to reach Vilcapampa and placed themselves under Manco's protection. There they waited until the royalist forces had taken their fill of vengeance and the new Viceroy, Blanco Nuñez Vela, arrived in Peru. Then they began to make overtures to the Viceroy, petitioning for pardon and safe conduct for themselves and an honourable reception for the Inca Manco should he decide to leave his mountain retreat and live in peace amongst the Spaniards.

To beguile their leisure whilst the negotiations with the Viceroy dragged on, the Spaniards had taught the Indians the game of bowls, and Manco became very fond of that sport. But Gomez Perez was a man of arrogant and irritable temper. One day when they were playing he lost his temper and one of the Indian attendants struck him on the chest and told him to show more respect to the Inca. For reply, Gomez Perez hurled one of the heavy wooden balls at the Inca's head and struck him lifeless to the ground. Maddened at the death of their prince, the Indians turned on the Spaniards who took refuge in their own quarters and defended themselves as best they could with their swords until their enemies set fire to the roof and forced them out into the open where they were despatched with arrows.

Manco was succeeded by his son Sayre Tupac, who thought it prudent to enter into negotiations with the Spaniards and finally decided to make his formal submission to the Viceroy. At the beginning of 1558, a few months after the arrival in Peru of Sarmiento who may himself have witnessed the event, the Inca prince made his solemn entry into Lima with all the ceremony and show which he could muster. The Viceroy, the Marqués de Cañete, had made him a gift of fine clothing for himself and his wife and had presented him with a mule valued at 500 pesos and caparisoned with trappings of black velvet trimmed with silver lace and adorned with silver stirrups. But Sayre Tupac did not wear on his head the scarlet fringe and the

two black-and-white feathers of the *corequinque* bird which were the special mark of the reigning Inca sovereigns; for it was not fitting that a prince who went to receive favours from the hands of the Christians should come in the guise of the ancient lords of the land. 200 captains and Indians escorted him, and he was borne along in their midst on a litter of crimson damask. The Marqués de Cañete received the Inca with every mark of honour, seating him beside him in the presence of his counsellors. Two days later, the Archbishop followed the Viceroy's lead and invited him to a great banquet where dishes garnished with the potatoes and hot peppers relished by the Indians were placed before him. Finally, the attendants bore in a great dish containing a scroll which the Inca learnt was the deed conferring upon him the great estates in the valley of Yucay, near his native Cuzco, which had been confiscated a short time before from a rebellious Spanish land-owner. Garcilasso relates that the Inca, far from showing pleasure at the gift, plucked out a thread from the rich mantle covering the table on which the banquet was served and exclaimed: 'The whole mantle is mine by rights, and you give me but one thread of it!' The anecdote is picturesque but a little difficult to believe. Sayre Tupac was mild and gentle by nature. He accepted the Viceroy's gift with the best grace he could, retired to his estates, and was received into the Catholic Church. But he did not long enjoy them, for he sickened soon afterwards and died, leaving the right of succession to the throne to his half-brothers who were still holding out, with a small band of resentful and irreconcilable followers, in the heart of the Vilcapampa mountains.

Tito Cusi, the elder though illegitimate surviving grandson of Huaina Capac, was then proclaimed by the Indians of Vilcapampa as their rightful lord. Tupac Amaru, Sayre's other brother, was regarded as too young to succeed, though he was in the legitimate line of descent. Tito Cusi seems to have been

in two minds whether to follow the example of his brother Sayre and come to terms with the Spaniards, or whether to continue his voluntary but precarious exile in Vilcapampa. Some of his captains and advisers were bitterly opposed to attempting any sort of understanding with the Spaniards. They reminded him of the fate of Atahualpa and Manco who had both been treacherously put to death by the white men they had set out to befriend. Even Sayre Tupac had not been permitted to enjoy for long the privileges and security which the Viceroy had promised him. The offers now being made to his successor, they averred, were nothing less than a ruse to get the Inca once more into the power of the Spaniards.

Whilst he was pondering the words of his advisers, an excellent opportunity presented itself to Tito Cusi to see something of the white men for himself without risk of detection and to form his own opinion about the strength of their armies and the magnificence of their religion of which he had heard so much. In Cuzco was living a cousin of his, Don Carlos Inca, a grandson of Huaina Capac who had embraced Christianity and lived in the palace of Colcampata, at the foot of the old fortress of that name. A son had just been born to Don Carlos, who was preparing to celebrate the christening with great pomp, the Viceroy himself having agreed to stand godfather to the child, and as many surviving members of the royal Inca household as possible attending the festivities. Taking his younger brother Tupac Amaru with him, Tito Cusi left Vilcapampa, entered Cuzco secretly and lodged in the roomy palace of Colcampata without the Spaniards getting wind of his identity. He was deeply impressed with the pomp and magnificence with which the Christians celebrated the christening, and with the overwhelming evidence of their military power. He returned to Vilcapampa convinced of the advisability of at least opening negotiations with them.

The Viceroy received the Inca's advances with deep satisfac-

tion and appointed a mission to accompany his envoys back to Vilcapampa to instruct him in Christian doctrine and obtain formal assurances of his submission and good faith. The mission consisted of two priests, Father Juan de Vivero, Prior of the Monastery of St Augustine, and Father Diego Ortiz, an Augustine Friar, two gentlemen from Cuzco named Atilano de Anaya and Diego Rodriguez de Figueroa, a public notary and a mestizo interpreter called Pedro Pando. They brought a costly present of velvet, brocade and linen for the adornment of the Inca's person, and a provision of wines, figs, almonds, and other delicacies for his table. Tito Cusi received the embassy courteously and listened to the preaching of the fathers and the grave words of the ambassadors. But still he could not make up his mind to accept their pledges, abandon his ancient honours and religion, and place himself in the hands of the Spaniards. The days went by, the Inca still temporised, and the embassy finally decided to return to Cuzco leaving only Father Diego Ortiz and his interpreter to press on with the conversion of the Inca.

Whilst Francisco de Toledo was receiving the reports of his envoys and issuing instructions to Atilano de Anaya to return to the Inca and summon him more sternly to the Viceroy's presence, Tito Cusi fell ill. It seemed to the Indians that the Christians had cast the same spell upon him as they had cast upon his brother Sayre Tupac. They besought Father Ortiz, at first with tears and then with threats, to intercede with the God of the Christians for his recovery. The priest replied meekly that he would pray for him every day, and that if it was His will the Inca would grow well, but that if it was His will that he should die, then He would take him to live with Him in paradise (for Tito Cusi had by then received baptism, taking the name of Don Felipe Tito Cusi Yupanqui). The Inca grew steadily worse and finally died. The fury of the Indians knew no bounds. Casting taunts and insults on the Christians,

they set upon Father Ortiz and his interpreter and tortured them to death. Then, having performed the last rites for the unfortunate Tito Cusi, they marched in solemn procession to the temple of the sun, bearing with them the royal insignia, and proclaimed the youthful Tupac Amaru as their new lord.

Shortly after these events, the Viceroy's second embassy set out from Cuzco. The Indian messengers sent on ahead to announce their coming were ambushed and killed and as Atilano de Anaya himself rode on to the bridge of Chuquisaca, which marked the entrance to the Inca's domains, a force of Indians surrounded and murdered him too. When the envoy's frightened negro servant got back to Cuzco with the news, the Viceroy grimly determined that the time had come to dislodge the Indians by force and incorporate Vilcapampa into the King's domains. A Council of Notables was summoned and preparations made for a punitive expedition. By May, the expedition was ready to set out.

The command of the expeditionary force was entrusted to a seasoned soldier and *encomendero*, Martin Hurtado de Arbieta, his second-in-command being Juan Alvarez Maldonado who had recently led an expedition into the formidable jungle east of the Andes. With them went a number of captains and 250 soldiers. Sarmiento, who had now finished writing his *History*, was designated '*secretario y alferes real*', an appointment roughly corresponding to civil governor and viceregal representative in the territories to be occupied. Another smaller column was despatched from Huamanja under Gaspar de Sotelo. Together, these forces were thought more than sufficient to crush the resistance of the Indians, and the Viceroy had given secret instructions that any of the Inca's followers who laid down their arms and submitted voluntarily should be spared and given safe conduct.

Hurtado de Arbieta led his little army over the Vilcacunca river at Yucay, following the right bank past the ancient



An Indian ambush.

fortress of Ollantay Tambo, with its romantic memories of Ollantay, the Indian general of humble birth who had fallen in love with a princess of the blood royal, rebelled against the emperor in his eagerness to wed her, and finally been pardoned by the magnanimous Inca. The expedition pushed on up the valley of the Vilcamaya until reaching the bridge of Chuquisaca, where the Viceroy's luckless envoy had been done to death some weeks before. Here the Indians had pitched their camp. The Spaniards attacked, and a sharp skirmish was fought over the surging waters of the torrent. Four discharges of the light cannons which the Spaniards had brought with them and a few salvos from their arquebuses decided the issue, and the Indians took flight without even staying to destroy the bridge.

The General next divided his force into two groups, sending

one of them across the mountains in forced marches to surprise the Indians in the rear in the valley of Vitcos. The Indians were forced back deeper and deeper into the mountains. As the Spaniards advanced through the narrow defiles, the Indians sought to harass them by hurling down great boulders. Sarmiento was in the thick of the fray, fighting shoulder to shoulder with his comrade Francisco de Valenzuela who discharged his arquebus, whilst Sarmiento warded off the missiles hurled by the enemy with his shield. At length the Spaniards joined up with the column which had advanced from the west under Gaspar de Sotelo, stormed the fortress of Huajnapucara and entered the town of Vilcapampa itself on 24th June. The Inca and his bodyguard had fled the day before, burning their houses and taking with them the most sacred of their possessions. From the now frightened and submissive population the Spaniards learnt for the first time of the death of Tito Cusi and the succession of the young Tupac Amaru. Sarmiento lost no time in raising the royal standard in the plaza of the little town and proclaiming possession of it in the name of His Majesty the King.

Tupac Amaru, it appeared, was making northwards for the province of Manaries where he hoped to find sanctuary amongst the friendly natives who had not yet come beneath the sway of the Spaniards. But his pursuers determined to press on with all speed and apprehend the Inca before he could make good his escape. After three days of forced march, the advance guard under Captain García de Loyola (nephew of St Ignatius, the founder of the Society of Jesus) succeeded in capturing some members of the Inca's family; a few days later, Tupac Amaru himself and his general, Hualpa Yupanqui, were seized just as they were on the point of entering the territory of the Manaries. Sarmiento tells us that it was he who took the Inca prisoner with his own hands. With the Indians was captured the great image of the sun known as Punchau, containing within its

golden breast the ashes of the hearts of the great Inca conquerors of the past – the most sacred and venerated object of their ancient rites.

The captive Inca was led back to Cuzco to await his inevitable doom. At the arch of Carmenca, which marked the entrance to the city, the General halted to reform his troops and to chain Tupac Amaru and his captains together. The Inca was dressed in a mantle and doublet of crimson velvet and wore on his head the royal headdress of the *mascapaychi* and the scarlet fringe. He was then imprisoned in the fortress of Colcampata from whose palace chambers he had once watched the baptism of the son of his cousin, Don Carlos Inca. Whilst preparations were proceeding for his formal indictment and execution, a delegation of prelates petitioned the Viceroy for mercy. But Toledo was adamant. A lofty scaffold was raised in the great square where the Inca's ancestors had so often presided over their splendid ceremonies. Crowds of Indians from the surrounding countryside began to flock into the capital to pay their last homage to their prince. Sarmiento has given us no account of the tragic scene which was to close the rule of that strange race whose history he had just recorded, but his comrade-in-arms, Baltasar de Ocampo, who witnessed the execution, has left us the following description:

"The Inca was taken from the fortress, through the public streets of the city, with a guard of 400 Canari Indians – great enemies of the Incas – with lances in their hands. He was accompanied by two monks who taught and told him many things of great consolation to the soul as they went, until they reached the scaffold which was reared high in the centre of the great square facing the cathedral. The open spaces, roofs, and windows in the parishes of Carmenca and San Cristobal were so crowded with spectators that if an orange had been thrown down it could not have reached the ground anywhere, so closely were the people packed. When the executioner, who

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was a Canari Indian,* took hold of the knife with which he was to behead Tupac Amaru there happened something marvellous to behold. The whole crowd of natives raised such a cry of anguish that it seemed as if the day of judgment had come, and all those of Spanish race showed their feelings too by shedding tears of grief and pain.

'When the Inca beheld the scene, he merely raised his right hand on high and let it fall. He alone remained calm and of an even mind. Then all the turmoil gave place to a silence so profound that no living thing moved, neither amongst those who were in the square nor amongst those who stood afar off. The Inca began to speak with the calm of one who knows he is about to die. He said that his course was now run and that he was deserving of death. He besought and charged all present who had children that they should never on any account curse them, but only chastise them. For when he was a child, having angered his mother, she had put a malediction on him by saying that he would come to a violent end and be put to death; all this had now come true. At this, the priests who attended him rebuked him saying that his fate was the will of God and was not the result of his mother's curse. As these fathers were, like St Paul, so eloquent in their preaching, they easily convinced him, and he repented of what he had said. He asked them all to forgive him, and to tell the Viceroy and the Magistrate that he would pray to God for them.

'While things were at this pass, the Bishop of Popayan . . . (and other prelates) . . . went to the Viceroy and fell on their knees beseeching him to show mercy and spare the life of the Inca. They urged that he should be sent to Spain to be judged by the King in person. But the Viceroy was deaf to all prayers. Juan de Soto, chief officer of the court and a servant of His Excellency, was sent on horseback with a pole to clear the way,

* In Poma de Ayala's drawing of the execution (reproduced on page 91), the executioner is shown as a Spaniard.

BVEN GOBIERNO
 ATOPA, AMARO LE COR
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The execution of Tupac Amaru, the Last Inca, by Poma de Ayala. Below, the lamentation of the Indians.

galloping furiously and riding down all kinds of people. He ordered the Inca's head to be cut off at once in the name of the Viceroy. The Inca then received consolation from the Fathers who were at his side and, taking leave of all, he put his head on the block like a lamb. The Executioner then stepped forward and taking the hair in his left hand, he severed the head with his knife at one blow, and held it up for all to see. As the head was struck off, the bells of the Cathedral began to ring, and those of all the monasteries and parish churches in the city joined in. The execution caused the greatest sorrow and brought tears to all eyes.'

Another witness adds the Tupac Amaru, in his farewell speech, openly repudiated the faith of his fathers, describing the deceits which the Incas had practised to make the people believe in their idols, and exhorting them to embrace the Christian religion. But neither the eloquence of their Inca nor the cruel death to which they saw him subjected could destroy the Indians' belief in his divinity. When the body had been taken away for burial and the head stuck at the end of a pole like that of a common malefactor for all to see, the Indians crept back to the plaza by night to worship it in silence. There they stood in mournful adoration until a Spanish officer sent word to the Viceroy who, fearing its effect on the people, ordered that the head should be taken away and given decent burial.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CANNIBALS AND INQUISITORS

The Viceroy did not dally long in Cuzco after the execution of Tupac Amaru. His visitation was but half done, and he had yet to traverse the southern portion of his wide domains which stretched away across the lofty Andean plateau for 200 leagues or more to the distant province of Charcas. In these remote frontier lands a warlike tribe of cannibals known as the Chiriguano were harassing the white settlers, carrying off their crops and cattle, and terrorising the peaceful Indian population.

Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa took his place once more in the Viceroy's suite, industriously collecting the topographical and historical information required by his master. They left Cuzco by the Inca military highway running south to the western shores of the great Lake Titicaca, whither Almagro and his men had passed on their epic march to discover the land of Chile. In these seemingly unpromising altitudes, where the icy waters of the inland sea broke the bleak monotony of the Andean plateau, had once thrived a centre of Indian life and worship far more venerable, mysterious and powerful even than the imperial city of Cuzco. To the Incas themselves, the ruins of Tiahuanaco rising so majestically on the shores of the lake, had presented an enigma whose answer was shrouded in the mists of legend long before they had come forth to rule and conquer. Maita Capac, the fourth Inca emperor, who was the first to lead his armies to those parts, had been struck speechless at the sight of a vanished grandeur so far beyond his imagining.

To the Spaniards, whose minds were now inured to the marvels of the New World, the scene was scarcely less impressive. What unknown race, they asked themselves, could have raised those great monoliths, some of them many times the height of a man, or hewn so finely the vast slabs of masonry which now lay strewn over the ground? With what tools had they been wrought, and from what distant quarries miraculously conveyed? What great shrine or city had this been, and for what remote ages had it stood there, before some unrecorded disaster had caused its abandonment? The Spaniards saw before them the ruins of great temples and palaces; a tremendous earthwork with stone foundations which might have served either as fortress or shrine, and which the natives superstitiously believed to be connected by an underground passage to the royal palaces of Cuzco 160 leagues away, stately flights of steps and massive arches, formed from immense blocks of masonry and adorned with intricately patterned figures, amongst which they recognised the many-rayed majesty of the sun-god; solemn statues of more than life size – some with royal diadems on their heads, others, men and women, in the most life-like of postures, standing or sitting, with glasses in their hands as if in the act of drinking, or stepping carefully over the brook which still ran unconcernedly amongst the ruins.

The Indians who accompanied the Viceroy's party, and those who lived hard by the ruins, had no light but that of legend and fable to throw on the mystery of their origin. Some said that they were the figures of the early inhabitants of the land which the gods had turned to stone in punishment for ill-treating strangers; others – as Sarmiento had already recorded in his *History* – that Tiahuanaco was the dwelling-place of the first men ever created, and that the God Viracocha had made the images as models for living men and women, but finding them too large, had abandoned them there and created men

and women of the size which they now are. Many believed that Tiahuanaco had been magically raised from the ground in the course of a single night; others held (for they knew nothing of the pottery and other signs of age-long human habitations buried deep beneath the ground) that it had been abandoned before ever reaching completion. Or perhaps, since all had heard tell of the great flood which had once swept over the world, Tiahuanaco too had been overwhelmed and never rebuilt. Legend had it too that after the destruction wrought by the flood, Viracocha had resolved to create the world anew, and in order to assist and bless his new creation he thought to make heavenly bodies to give them light (for they had lived before in darkness). So he brought forth from the depths of the lake the sun, the moon, and the stars; and because the moon was the brightest of them all, the sun grew jealous and hurled a handful of ashes in her face which dimmed her brightness to the pallor which she still retains today.

Under the ruins of Tiahuanaco many believed that priceless treasures were to be found. A fortunate few had even discovered some objects of value, though not the treasures of their dreams. Captain Juan de Vargas, uncle of the chronicler Garcilasso de la Vega, had received information from a mysterious stranger of the exact whereabouts of some treasure trove, and sure enough, when he began to dig, discovered many precious objects exactly as had been said, including a head made of solid gold, in human likeness, and once part of a heathen idol. But that same night the Captain had suffered a mysterious death, as if a curse lay upon him. Since then, many fortune-seekers, undeterred by his fate, had delved amongst the ruins, whilst others carried off blocks of stones for the construction of the church or of their own houses.

The hidden treasures so eagerly sought by the Spaniards were not however to be found beneath the ruined majesty of Tiahuanaco, but many leagues away to the south, in the distant

province of Charcas and in Chuquisaca, which were now the goal of the Viceroy's long march. The early conquistadores had found the Indians there friendly and peaceful folk, and the land already rich in silver. The harshness of Spanish rule and their rapacity in exploiting the mines had provoked a rising of the natives. After suppressing it, they founded the city of Chuquisaca, or La Plata, as it was more often called after the nearby silver mines, so as to consolidate their hold on the province. Then there had occurred a discovery which surpassed their most fervent hopes. Myth and legend were soon richly woven around the marvellous event. Old men would relate how, long before the coming of the Spaniards, the Incas had searched these lands for precious metals and sent their messengers to probe a strange conical hill which rose 1,500 feet above the bleak plateau in the form of a gigantic sugar-loaf. As their picks broke the tawny crust of the hill, a mighty thunder-clap rang out, and a mysterious voice issued from the earth saying: 'Begone; my riches are not for you, but for others'. So they called the place Potocsi or Potosí, which means in their tongue, 'it has thundered'.

The years passed, and none dared to wrest the secret from the mysterious hill until one day an Indian pursuing a llama over the hillside chanced to tear up a bush and found pellets of bright metal adhering to its roots. Another version has it that the Indian, overtaken by nightfall, gathered brushwood and made a camp fire over which he drowsed until morning, only to find, to his amazement, that the heat had melted the rock round and left rough ingots of silver. At all events, the news soon spread far and wide and brought swarms of fortune-seekers hurrying to the scene. A sprawling settlement of tents and shacks arose on the wind-swept, marshy land at the foot of the great hill. Potosí began to yield up its wealth - a wealth so fabulous that the coffers of Spain began to overflow and huge personal fortunes were made, whilst the town itself,

raised to the dignity of Imperial City, began to adorn itself with every extravagance which money could procure. Violent, icy gales would still come sweeping down from the Andean peaks, carrying away roofs and windows from the houses, and tearing up the parasols which the Indians set up over their booths in the market place and blowing them into the lake a good league from the city. But on the whole, the climate no longer seemed quite so rigorous as at first, and this the pious ascribed to the singular providence of God and to His benevolent interest in the city.

Sometimes, however, the wickedness of the Imperial City – for it soon attracted the most unscrupulous and rapacious adventurers in the New World – called forth the divine wrath. Then the rich seams of metal would dry up, and the silver unaccountably refuse to be separated from the rough ore. The great flow of wealth from the mines would dwindle to a trickle and the baggage trains of llamas with their precious loads no longer wend their way across the plateau. Then men would cry out that they were ruined and the churches be thronged with anxious penitents until the heavenly favour and commercial prosperity were again restored. Never had so many saints been invoked to shed their special protection over a city. Potosí was dedicated to the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady, to St James, the patron saint of Spain, and to the Blessed Sacrament. When, in 1560, a terrible plague and drought smote the city, it became clear that still more protection must be sought. A solemn office was held in the chief church, the names of innumerable saints were written down and piously deposited in a silver dish, and lots were then drawn for the new patron. It was found without a shadow of doubt that the saint most interested in the welfare of Potosí was St Augustine. So the city was dedicated afresh to its new patron and sure enough the rains came and the plague went.

It was the Church of San Francisco, however, which could

still boast the most remarkable miracle-working image. The Viceroy saw it shortly after his arrival and reported to the King: 'What we most marvelled to behold was that its sacred beard was made of real hair, which we touched and, though unworthy, kissed with all due humility and reverence'. Every Maundy Thursday, the priests were wont to carry the image in procession through the city after first carefully combing its beard and bestowing the hairs which came out on the faithful who treasured them as precious relics. Yet all remarked how the beard always remained miraculously thick and glossy. In times of exceptional wickedness or disaster, white hairs were found amongst the beard, and these were naturally prized as the most precious of all. Once an overzealous priest surreptitiously cut off part of the image's whiskers, but the hair had soon miraculously grown again over the bare patch.

The highroad between Cuzco and Potosí had become one of the most frequented and important in the country. As the Viceroy's cavalcade rode along it, they passed herds of llamas some of them numbering a thousand head or more, bearing on their backs the produce of the silver-mines, loads of cloth, oil, and wine sent out from Spain, or bundles of the much-prized *coca* leaves. The progress of these herds was leisurely enough; the beasts would not go more than three leagues a day nor carry more than three to four *arobas* of burden. When overloaded or over-driven, they would eject a sudden squirt of saliva at their drivers' faces to throw themselves, load and all, upon the ground, where they would let their throats be cut rather than rise again. The strength and number of the flocks had declined greatly since the days of the Incas, and more than two-thirds of them had perished as a result of the great pest which had swept the country in the time of Viceroy Blasco Núñez. But their possession was still greatly prized, specially for the profitable trade between Cuzco and Potosí. Even Spanish captains and landowners of good standing took



A convoy of heavily-laden llamas.

pleasure in accompanying their herds on the two months' journey, riding off every morning with their hounds and their falcons to hunt and rejoining the slow-moving convoy at nightfall with the spoils of the day's sport – a dozen partridges, or a young stag or guanaco to supplement their evening meal. Then the Indians would unload their beasts, pile the merchandise by the roadside, wrap themselves up in their cloaks and blankets, and fall asleep beneath the kindly protection of *Mama Quilla*, the moon goddess.

In November 1572, when the Viceroy reached Potosí, it seemed that the sins of the inhabitants must once again be impeding the prosperity of the city, for the mines were no longer yielding treasure in such abundance. The hill was now honeycombed with innumerable tunnels whose working had become difficult and dangerous. The Indians had found that the ores they discovered were sometimes twisted into strange

shapes which, to their superstitious fancy, suggested trees, animals, or terrible monsters. One such mass bore such striking resemblance to the human form that they held it to be the spirit of the hill itself, and when the Spaniards ordered its 'neck' to be hacked through so that it could more easily be extracted, they murmured to each other – mindful perhaps of the fate of Tupac Amaru – "They have cut off the heads of our Incas – now they do the same to the Gods themselves. Surely misfortune will come upon us!"

But the Viceroy, for all his bigotry, was quick to see that the apparent exhaustion of the mines was not a punishment for human wickedness but rather the outcome of too primitive methods of production. Only a few years before, a new method of extracting silver through the use of mercury had been invented, and he determined to apply it in Potosí. The results were more than encouraging. Even the old ores which had been cast aside as useless were treated anew and found to yield up silver. The great days of Potosí were clearly only dawning. The city itself had to be made worthy of its greatness. It sprawled higgledy-piggledy at the foot of the hill, in an unsightly disorder repugnant to the Viceroy's tidy mind. With inexhaustible energy he set about replanning it; spacious squares were traced out, straight roads driven through the maze of alleys, and the Spanish town divided from the Indian. To crown his work, Toledo laid the foundation stone of the new cathedral which he proposed to build mainly at his own expense.

Next to the accumulation of wealth and the practice of their religious rites, the citizens of Potosí were chiefly given to sumptuous display and incessant brawling. Not only were the first two weeks after the Viceroy's entry spent in every form of entertainment and revelry; the arrival soon afterwards of a courier announcing the birth of the infant Prince Ferdinand and news of the great victory of Lepanto over the Turkish

fleet provided fresh cause for festivities. Potosí was also notorious for the duels and brawls in which not only the soldiery, but merchants, respectable citizens, and even Indians boisterously indulged. Duels were fought on any pretext or on none, with an infinite variety of weapons and on every sort of condition; on horseback, on foot, even on bended knee – ‘diabolical piety’, a contemporary chronicler calls it – in armour, stripped to the waist despite the rigorous climate, or clad in crimson doublet and hose so that no stain of blood should be noticed. Often enough the seconds would join in; sometimes, whole bands and companies of partisans. So scandalous had these disorders become that some honest citizens had chosen to leave their homes in Potosí and live elsewhere.

Potosí, as Sarmiento observed, was under the predominant influence of the planets Mercury and Jupiter; Mercury indicated wisdom, skill, and success in commerce; Jupiter, magnificence and liberality in style of living. It would soon be seen whether Mars too was favourable. Toledo had ordered a census of Potosí to be taken and found that the inhabitants, Spaniards and Indians together, numbered 120,000 souls. The force which he intended to recruit for the campaign against the Chiriguanoes totalled only 300 Spaniards, drawn from Potosí and its traditional rival, the city of La Plata, together with a body of Indian auxiliaries. The nature of the country did not favour the deployment of large bodies of men. A more difficult territory for campaigning could hardly be imagined. Pachacuti Inca Yupanqui had attempted in vain to subdue it. It was a land of craggy mountains and barren plateaux; broken by broad rivers, lakes and swamps. The enemy proved to be highly skilled in the art of guerrilla warfare. Never risking a pitched battle with the better armed Spaniards, they dispersed more and more deeply into the desolate countryside, inveigling the Spanish columns into treacherous quagmires and across fast-flowing mountain streams which carried off their baggage

trains. The Spaniards could do little more than burn the Indians' villages and confiscate their crops. Worn out by the heat and fatigue of the long march, the Viceroy at length sickened and had to be carried back by litter over hazardous mountain ways to the city of La Plata. The Inca Garcilasso de la Vega, who was no friend of Toledo's, adds with a touch of malice that the paths were sometimes so rough that the Viceroy had to be carried on the shoulders of his men in a sort of wicker basket, and that the savages mocked and taunted him from the forests, crying: 'Who is that old woman you have in the basket? Put her down, and we will come and make our supper off her!' For the Chiriguanos were notorious cannibals whose passion for human flesh was such that if they raided a peaceful settlement and found an Indian guarding his well-fed flocks, they would pay no heed to the sheep but try to kill and eat the shepherd. The Viceroy and his soldiers escaped with whole skins from the cannibals but their campaign proved no more effective than that of the Inca Yupanqui. The Chiriguano warriors still survived to continue their depredations against the Spanish settlers.

Exactly what part Sarmiento took in this campaign we do not know. It seems probable that he may have joined one of the relief parties sent out from La Plata in support of the Viceroy's main forces. At all events, Toledo judged his services indispensable for the campaign; for at the beginning of 1574, whilst the expedition was ploughing its way through the arduous and hostile territory of the Chiriguanos, the Viceroy received a letter from the tribunal of the Inquisition in Lima requesting the immediate return of Sarmiento to face fresh charges of sorcery. Toledo, for all his piety, had no intention of losing his cosmographer at this critical stage of operations. He sent back a firm reply stating that Sarmiento was on active service and could not be released but promising he should be placed at the disposal of the Holy Office as soon as the cam-

paign was over. Sarmiento's indignation on learning of the charges levelled by the Inquisition against him while he was risking his life in the service of the King's Most Sacred Majesty may well be imagined. He was far too obstinate and violent by nature ever to have acquiesced in his previous condemnation, and the twelve-page vindication of his famous astronomical rings which he had addressed to the Archbishop in thoroughly unrepentant and even aggressive language was now the immediate cause of the Inquisition's fresh summons. The Archbishop himself, it will be recalled, had handled the case before in his capacity as Acting Inquisitor. Since then, the Holy Office had been regularly established in Lima and could therefore investigate cases of alleged heresy and witchcraft with greater thoroughness. Sarmiento, angry but undismayed, prepared once more to face his judges as soon as accounts had been settled with the cannibals. By the middle of November 1575 he had given himself up to the ecclesiastical authorities and we find him awaiting trial in prison.

The annals of the Inquisition which record this second trial of Sarmiento show that he conducted his defence with forceful arguments and his accustomed vigour. The previous condemnation, he roundly declared, was unjust. The rings were not magical but constructed according to new scientific principles which he had been intelligent enough to discover. In the same way, the ignorant believed that certain plants had magic power to heal, whereas the learned knew that their virtue was not magic but medicinal. Sarmiento declared that he had nothing on his conscience. Had not the affair been referred to Friar Francisco de la Cruz and other learned and saintly men? Unfortunately for Sarmiento, things had changed since then, and the once saintly Francisco de la Cruz had now himself been indicted for heresy and was shortly to lose his life at the stake. The tone of Sarmiento's defence was scarcely calculated to win the favour of his judges. He frankly charged the Archbishop

with personal spite against him and threatened to appeal to the Pope. It seems to have been only at the intervention of one of the other confessors that Sarmiento was prevailed upon to desist.

The case against the prisoner included other charges which, though trivial enough in themselves, throw characteristic light on Sarmiento's personality. He was accused of the crime of having read the lines of a lady's hand and predicted that two men would lose their lives on her account. Moreover, he had dared to assert that the Gospel was not sufficiently preached in Spain. Two witnesses had heard him make this remark; and when one of them attempted to expostulate with him and declared that such an opinion was disrespectful to the Church, he had retorted arrogantly that 'he knew very well what he was saying, better indeed than men like the person who was now rebuking him, whose thick skulls stood in need of a good schoolmaster, whereas he, with his superior intelligence and exceptional memory, had studied the matter and knew all about it, and much else besides'.

Such offensive and dogmatic obstinacy could only meet with one reaction from the Church. When finally the sentence was delivered in 1578, by which time Sarmiento at least had the consolation of knowing that his enemy the Archbishop was dead, he was found guilty and penalties of exile, recantation, and penance were again imposed. It was only through the intervention of the Viceroy that he was saved from the more humiliating clauses of the sentence, and apparently also permitted to go on residing in Lima, for we find him officially designated to observe the eclipse of the sun in the same year. Then, early the following year, there supervened a startling event which was to commit his destiny once more to the sea and to the quest which henceforth dominated his life. On the night of 13th February, the *Golden Hind* penetrated into the harbour of Callao, the port of Lima, played havoc with the shipping and slipped out again to pursue its path of plunder

under the nose of the indignant but powerless Viceroy. To avenge this unprecedented affront, it was to his resourceful cosmographer and navigator, his seasoned and intrepid captain, Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa, that Toledo now turned for help.

CHAPTER EIGHT

IN PURSUIT OF THE DRAGON

'Peru was at peace', Sarmiento records, 'when, for our sins, English pirates passed through the Straits of the Mother of God, commonly called of Magellan, into the South Sea under their chief, one Francisco Drac, a native of Plemna (Plymouth) and a man of most vile condition, though a prudent seaman and a bold corsair, . . . where he took famous spoil and plunder.' The very name of the intruder, which to the Spanish ear suggests *draque* or 'dragon', was charged with an apt and dread significance. Ever since Balboa had waded sword in hand into the Gulf of San Miguel and claimed the whole vast ocean for his sovereign, the Pacific had been looked upon as the exclusive preserve of Spain. It was commonly believed, moreover, that the passage between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans discovered eighty years before by Magellan had been closed up by some natural cataclysm and Spain's possessions on the west coast of America thereby rendered doubly safe from attack. Surely, then, it could only be by the help of the Devil himself that an English pirate and heretic had managed to penetrate into the Spanish ocean to burn and plunder with impunity.

The blow fell upon Callao, the port of Lima, between ten and twelve o'clock on the night of 13th February 1579. The Spaniards were taken completely unawares. So far were they from imagining that the port could ever be exposed to attack that they had placed no cannon, nor even an arquebus, to guard it. Nine Spanish ships were lying at anchor, and the pilot



View of Callao and Lima.

whom Drake had seized from a vessel lying outside took the *Golden Hind* right in amongst them. Drake's men went from ship to ship looking for treasure, and when they found none, they cut the cables and let the vessels drift ashore. A precious cargo of silver bars, valued at some 200,000 pesos and destined for the royal treasury, had not yet been taken aboard. The only prey which the English thought worth taking was a ship recently arrived from Panama with a cargo of Spanish cloth. Putting a prize crew aboard her, Drake prepared to sail off but found the *Golden Hind* immobilised by a sudden calm.

Tidings of the disaster had meanwhile been carried to the Viceroy at Lima. In the first panic aroused by the incursion, the identity of the raiders was not known and all manner of rumour was rife; only later was it realised that they were English pirates. Toledo at once ordered the alarm to be

sounded and all men capable of bearing arms to assemble in the plaza. Pedro Sarmiento was amongst the first to answer the summons. Mustering in haste what forces he could, Toledo sent them down to Callao under the command of Diego de Frías Trejo. There they found the *Golden Hind* still becalmed in the offing. Frías Trejo hurriedly embarked 300 men in a couple of ships and put off in an attempt to board and capture the raider. But before they could close with her, a breath of wind stirred the sails of the *Golden Hind* and sent her gliding off beyond their reach. For the next day and part of the night the chase continued, but the English ship drew steadily away from her pursuers. Standing further out to sea, she could take more advantage of what slight breeze there was. The Spanish vessels which had put to sea hastily without provisions, ballast, or artillery, were ill-equipped for the chase. Moreover, as Sarmiento rather scornfully relates, many of the soldiers were laid low with seasickness and would have given an exceedingly poor account of themselves in an engagement. Sarmiento, as we might expect of him, urged that the pursuit should be continued and was mortified when it was broken off.

The Viceroy awaited the return of the expedition with impatience and ill humour. Fearing that some of the seasick warriors might take the first opportunity to slip off home, he ordered that none should disembark without his permission, whilst he pressed ahead with preparations for a more formidable and better equipped expedition. By 27th February he had raised 120 soldiers and crews for the two ships which he had fitted out with the necessary provisions and arms. He had also sent off a fast sailing vessel to warn the ports between Lima and Panama to be on their guard against attacks from the English. But though the second expedition was now better prepared and more resolved to bring the raider to book, its chances of doing so were greatly reduced. Drake had by then nearly two weeks' start of his pursuers.

The Viceroy placed his kinsman Luis de Toledo in command of the expedition. Sarmiento held the rank of *sargento mayor*, or fourth in seniority, and was soon at loggerheads with his chief whose plan was to sail up the coast seeking news of the invader, until reaching Panama. Sarmiento held that they should set course straight for Nicaragua and Mexico, in the hope of intercepting him there, for he rightly anticipated that Drake would sail on up the coast of America and attempt to make his way back to England by the discovery of a northwest passage rather than retrace his course through the Straits of Magellan. This opinion he asserted with his usual vehemence, swearing that 'they might cut off his head' if he proved wrong. But the General, after some wavering, stuck to his plan and hugged the coast all the way to Panama. There he learnt that Drake had captured a treasure ship, with a booty of some 400,000 pesos on board, and had vanished again over the wastes of the ocean to complete his famous voyage round the world. Luis de Toledo disembarked in Panama, for he was to take ship to Spain, and the expedition returned in dejection to Callao to face the wrath of the Viceroy. Sarmiento had the bitter satisfaction of knowing that his surmise had proved correct and that if the Spaniards had struck out boldly across the gulf they would have stood a good chance of intercepting Drake off Panama. 'God pardon the man who made us turn back the first time and would not cross the gulf the second,' he wrote, 'for had we pressed on in either of these expeditions we should have brought the famous robber to book and deterred all others from following in his footsteps, and all the plundered wealth would have been restored to His Majesty and to its rightful owners.'

In these two abortive expeditions, as in the voyage of discovery to the Solomon Islands, it had been Sarmiento's misfortune to be overruled by men superior to him in rank but inferior in resolution and judgment. But the Viceroy's confi-

dence in his abilities remained unshaken, and the opportunity was soon given to Sarmiento to prove his worth as an independent commander. He was the sort of man, the Viceroy knew, to be spurred on rather than discouraged by the magnitude of the perils and difficulties which would confront him. For Toledo was now convinced that, if the chances of catching Drake were growing increasingly slender, at least it must be made impossible for any other adventurers to follow in his tracks. The fate of the two other vessels, the *Elizabeth* and the *Marigold*, which had set out from England with Drake was also uncertain; perhaps they too might descend upon the coasts of Chile and Peru and then make their way back through the Straits of Magellan. So long as the dreadful possibility of attack by English pirates lasted, the commerce of the Spanish colonies would never fully recover from the shock of Drake's visitation.

What, then, could be done? Drake had entered the South Sea by the only route then known to exist – the Straits of Magellan. It is true that tempests had driven the *Golden Hind* down to the latitudes of Cape Horn without affording him a glimpse of the mythical continent, Terra Australis, which geographers believed to divide the Pacific from the Atlantic. But many decades were to pass before his testimony received confirmation and general acceptance. Men long continued to believe that the Straits were the only gateway to the Pacific. That the whole of Spain's possessions in the South Seas could thus be rendered inviolate by the establishment of a Spanish colony on the shores of the Straits and by the fortification of the narrows was the Viceroy's conviction. Sarmiento wholeheartedly agreed; the exploration of the intricate and perilous approaches to the Straits (which had never yet been traversed from the Pacific) and the reconnaissance of the Straits themselves with a view to colonisation and settlement was an enterprise which appealed strongly to his ardent temperament.

The Viceroy therefore offered the command of the expedi-

tion to the Straits to Pedro Sarmiento who, 'to serve His Majesty, accepted it, despite the many things that were, or might be, against it; for it had ever been his wont to spend his life in the service of his King and natural Liege, and it was not meet to save or excuse his person in this venture for fear of the hardships and death of which there was common talk, and from which all men drew back, but rather because of all these things to serve God and Your Majesty with the greater will'. The Viceroy, whose health was beginning to break down under the strain of his incessant labours, came down to Callao to select the two strongest, fastest and newest vessels for the expedition. Sarmiento supervised their fitting out and provisioning, and after great exertions – for attempts to explore the Straits had already taken notorious toll of life – managed to enlist between fifty and sixty seamen and as many soldiers for the expedition. For his second in command, or *almirante*, Sarmiento was given Juan de Villalobos, for whom he soon developed a marked antipathy. The Chief Pilot of the expedition was Hernando Lamero, well-known for his long experience of the maze of channels and islands in the south of Chile. Two other pilots, Antón Pablos and Hernando Alonso, were also detailed to join the expedition.

By the beginning of October 1579, the ships were ready to sail. The Viceroy piously resolved to commend them to the special protection of Our Lady and christened the flagship *Nuestra Señora de la Esperanza*. The second ship, commanded by Villalobos, was called *San Francisco*. Before embarking, the members of the expedition were summoned to the presence of the Viceroy who spoke to them gravely of the dangers and hardships which they were likely to encounter and exhorted them to face them like good Christians and men of courage. He had in mind no doubt – as had his listeners – the celebrated expedition of Juan Ladrillero who had managed, in the face of overwhelming difficulties, to explore the eastern approaches to

the Straits, but had returned famished and emaciated, with but one other sailor and a negro servant as sole survivors of the expedition, only to die a few days after reaching port. The Viceroy reminded the Spaniards of the special importance which he attached to the expedition and promised that their services would be amply rewarded. Then he handed Sarmiento the royal standard, gave his hand to be kissed, and dismissed them with his blessing. When they had embarked, an oath of loyalty was taken and Sarmiento read out to them the Viceroy's sailing orders.

First, the men were reminded that they were sailing under the special protection of the Blessed Virgin. This knowledge must have filled Sarmiento with deep satisfaction for throughout his life he cherished particular veneration for the Virgin and attributed his numerous escapes from death or injury to her special protection. The Straits were always, for him, 'The Straits of Madre de Dios, commonly called by others Magellan's Straits'. The voyage in vessels dedicated to the Virgin to explore waters also deemed sacred to her thus had in it an element of pilgrimage, and the rough sailors and soldiers who had embarked upon it were expected to show something of the devotion of pilgrims. This may help us to understand how Sarmiento, when he came to supplement the Viceroy's sailing orders with detailed instructions of his own, could lay down that no swearing or profanity must be heard on board and that any man caught gambling for another's possessions would be stripped of his own.

The expedition was instructed to reconnoitre, observe, chart, record and take formal possession of the shores and waters through which they passed in their voyage through the Straits. The Viceroy's scrupulous concern for accuracy in reporting, which he sought to ensure in Peru by causing the results of his investigations to be read out before the Inca representatives, was now shown in the safeguards laid down for

checking the ship's log. Every evening, the entries in the ship's log were to be read out before the ship's company who were enjoined to see that any errors or inaccuracies were put right. The natural features and products of the regions through which they passed were to be carefully studied, and special attention paid to cultivating friendly relations with the inhabitants: 'And should you encounter some settlements of Indians, you shall treat them well and give them presents of combs, scissors, knives, hooks, coloured buttons, mirrors, bells, and other things with which you have been supplied, and you shall try to take some of the Indians with you to serve as interpreters, according them every good treatment. By means of these interpreters, or as best you may, you shall speak and converse with the people of those lands, seeking to understand their customs, qualities, and the manner in which they and their neighbours live, informing yourself of the religion which they profess and the idols which they adore; the sacrifices and forms of worship which they practise, whether there is amongst them any Doctrine or pursuit of Letters; how they are ruled and governed; whether they have kings and if they are hereditary or by election; or whether they are governed as republicans or by lineages; what tax and tributes they pay and exact, and in what way and to whom, and what objects they most prize; which products they extract from the earth, and which they bring from other parts and most esteem; if there are any metals to be found, and of what quality; if there are spices and some manner of drugs and aromatic herbs, for which purpose you will take with you some samples such as pepper, cloves, cinnamon, ginger and nutmeg, and other things to show and teach and ask after. You will also inform yourself whether there are any sorts of stone or precious thing such as our nation esteems; you shall know their animals, wild and domestic, and the quality of the plants and of the wild and cultivated trees there are in the land, and of the advantage they derive from them;

likewise, of the food and victuals which there are, and of those which are good you shall take aboard for your voyage, but not taking anything from the Indians against their will, but in exchange and friendship; and all these things you must do without dallying on the way, lest the time should pass and the main reason for which you have been sent be brought to nought.'

Throughout the long process of navigation, exploration, and enquiry in waters notorious for the violence of their storms and the ubiquitous treachery of their hidden reefs, the two ships were to take the utmost care not to get separated. The *almiranta* (Villalobos' ship) was to keep Sarmiento's flag in sight by day and follow his ship's lantern by night. If, in spite of their exertions, the two ships got blown apart, the one which reached the mouth of the Straits first should wait there for fifteen days so that her companion might have time to rejoin her. Then, once the western approaches to the Straits had been discovered, one of the ships should return to report to the Viceroy, or if contrary winds made this impossible, should proceed to the River Plate and report to the Governor there. The other ship should make for Spain to report to the King and the Council of the Indies. During the actual passage of the Straits care should be redoubled to observe and record everything of interest, and to mark the sites which would be most favourable for the founding of a colony and the construction of fortifications.

And what of the immediate cause of all this activity, the man whose daring had alarmed the loyal subjects of the King of Spain into hastily sending off this expedition? The Viceroy's instructions on how to deal with Drake, should any trace of him be discovered, are categorical, but we seem to detect a note of petulance, of impotence almost, in his words, as if he knew that his men would never find him, or if they did, be powerless against the Dragon unless the Almighty Himself should see fit to strike at the heretic through their arms:

'Should you encounter or have news of the ships in which Francisco Drakez, the English pirate, has entered these southern seas and lands and done the harm and mischief which you know, you shall strive to take, kill, or dispose of him in battle, at whatever cost, for you have men, arms and munitions enough to overcome him; this you shall do with great diligence, and without losing any occasion for it, for you know of how great importance this will be for the service of Our Lord and of His Majesty, as also of these lands, that this pirate should be taken and punished; and Our Lord, in whose service this is done, will give you strength for it. And when you have taken him, you and your officers and soldiers will be right well rewarded by keeping what you capture as a prize, and other favours will be shown you; this is what I promise you in the name of His Royal Majesty. And should you encounter other pirates, you shall attack and deal with them as is fitting, setting your hopes always in the Lord who will give you strength and power against your enemies; therefore be of good courage.'

CHAPTER NINE

THROUGH THE STRAITS

'At four o'clock of the afternoon of 11th October, 1579,' Sarmiento records, 'in the name of the Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, three persons and one God, we weighed anchor and left the port of Callao.' The *Nuestra Señora de la Esperanza* soon began to give signs of the haste with which the expedition had been prepared. Sarmiento was forced to put into the port of Pisco, some thirty odd leagues to the south of Callao, to repair her hull which had already begun to leak. Ten days later the expedition set sail again, following a south-westerly course so as to avoid the strong adverse currents sweeping up the coasts of Chile. On nearing latitude 50, Sarmiento judged that they must be approaching the labyrinth of islands, channels, and fjords known to conceal the entrance to the Straits, and changed course to the east. So far, the voyage had been a straightforward one and they had covered the distance of nearly 700 leagues in only twenty-seven days. Now the real trial of skill and endurance was to begin.

The land which came into sight was wild and rocky, curving away in a succession of cove and headland to what appeared to be a vast bay lying at the foot of a chain of lofty mountains which could be no other than a southerly part of that immense Andean Cordillera with which Sarmiento had been familiar in Peru. At the southern end of the bay, three craggy peaks towered above the water. Sarmiento deemed it fitting to christen it the Gulf of the Trinity – a name which it retains to

this day – and began to probe the many channels and inlets which opened from it, like fingers from the palm of the hand, in quest of the entrance of the Straits. To find a safe anchorage for the ships was no easy task, for the gales would blow up with unexpected fury, their strength seemingly redoubled by compression within the mountain walls, and set anchor ropes straining and chafing against the sharp rocks beneath the water. The *Nuestra Señora de la Esperanza* lost an anchor and would have been driven ashore had not Sarmiento, ‘calling upon God and his Most Blessed Mother’, managed to make fast with a spare one just in time.

‘On the following Sunday, 22nd November,’ he records, referring to himself, as was his practice, in the third person, ‘General Pedro Sarmiento landed with the greater part of his men; then, after setting up a lofty cross which was adored with great devotion, and falling on their knees to sing the *Te Deum*, all gave heartfelt thanks to God for the great mercies received at His divine hand. This done, the Captain-General, Pedro Sarmiento, stood up and clasping the hilt of his sword, cried out in the presence of all that they should bear witness that he thereby took possession of the land for evermore in the name of his Sacred, Catholic, Royal Majesty the King, Don Felipe our Lord, King of Castille and its domains, and in the name of his heirs and successors. And in witness thereof, that those present might remember it, he took his sword and cut trees, branches, and plants, and heaped up stones to form a landmark in sign of possession. And as such acts of taking possession should be fully recorded, and the Viceroy had specially commanded that we should take possession wherever we landed, Pedro Sarmiento caused the notaries to make a solemn record of these things.’

Though they were now in formal possession of these wild, uncharted lands, Sarmiento and his companions had little idea of exactly what they comprised or where they lay in relation

to the Straits. As soon therefore as he had completed the ceremony, he took his astrolabe and calculated his position as exactly 50° south. Then, taking half a dozen companions with him, he set off to climb a lofty hill from which a wide view of sea and land might be obtained. The ascent was steep and painful. Sharp rocks cut the soles of their *alpargatas* to threads and in places they were obliged to make their way through the trees, scrambling from branch to branch like monkeys. When at last they reached the summit, the scene which spread itself beneath them was a remarkable one. They had hoped to discover simply whether the land around them was an island or a peninsula of the mainland. What they beheld was an intricate maze of land and water – islands and peninsulas, coves, inlets, and fjords – all intermingled in seemingly inextricable confusion. The land, in Sarmiento's phrase, had been 'torn to shreds'. They saw themselves to be in an archipelago, and counted from where they stood no less than eighty-five islands, large and small. They observed however, with relief, that the main channel led southwards, broad and clear, towards what Sarmiento hoped was the mouth of the Straits. As soon as they had climbed down from the hilltop, Sarmiento ordered the ship's boat to be made ready so that they could verify his surmise. Taking with him the pilots Hernando Lamero and Antón Pablos, together with ten soldiers armed with swords and arquebuses, Sarmiento set off to explore in the long-boat, whilst the rest of the men cut wood and repaired the *Nuestra Señora de la Esperanza* and the *San Francisco* from the buffetings they had received during the voyage.

But the entrance to the Straits was infinitely more distant and difficult to discover than Sarmiento had so hopefully imagined. Their first voyage in the long-boat lasted six days and brought them only as far as the south-eastern tip of the island which still bears the name given it by Sarmiento, with customary devotion to his patron saint – Isla Madre de Dios. Lack

of space had led them to bring rations for only four days, and the Spaniards soon fell to gathering the shell-fish which they found there in the greatest abundance. 'In some places,' Sarmiento tells us, 'we discovered shell-fish with so many pearls inside them that we were sorry to find that we could not eat them, for it was like trying to crunch pebbles; for when we went exploring, we desired food more than riches. From this we saw', the General added philosophically, 'how worthless a thing are riches, which cannot be eaten, when men are hungry.'

The shores of the island were clothed in almost impenetrable vegetation, the ground being carpeted with a soft spongy moss into which a man might sink up to his armpits. The most practical method of progress was often to crawl from one treetop to another, so stunted and close to one another did they grow. The rain fell almost incessantly and 'then the woods become an ocean, and the shore one great river gushing into the sea'. The cold was intense, and was rendered all the more intolerable by the fact that the men had no dry clothes to change into, for there was barely room in the boat for themselves and the small store of food. The only way to keep warm was to row, which the men did with such a good heart that they returned to the ships having covered seventy leagues in six days.

The news, which the boat party could now confirm, that the land christened *Madre de Dios* was indeed an island and that by sailing along its shores they could regain the open sea, greatly comforted the Spaniards who had begun to fear that their General had brought them into a labyrinth from which they could only escape at the peril of their lives. Some had already begun to murmur that Sarmiento had led them as far as any man could prudently go, and that the only sensible course was to turn back. Sarmiento believed that Villalobos, the *almirante*, was secretly encouraging these murmurings and planning to desert the expedition. The *almirante* had pitched



Canoe Indians, fleeing in terror from Spaniards.

his tent on shore, and when a squall threatened to tear the *San Francisco* from her moorings, it was Sarmiento who had to hurry aboard and secure her whilst her commander dallied on shore. Sarmiento rebuked him for his negligence, but – he tells us – ‘with moderation, for it was no time for more’. But we know our hero’s ungovernable temper; perhaps his ‘moderation’ was another man’s excess, and the *almirante* may well have been left smarting under Sarmiento’s rebukes and ready to seize the opportunity which the hazards of the voyage were later to offer him.

A few days later, the *Nuestra Señora de la Esperanza* and the *San Francisco* reached the sheltered anchorage which the boat party had discovered at the south-eastern end of the island. Sarmiento lost little time in preparing a new expedition in the long-boat. Taking with him provisions for eight days, he set a southerly course and soon reached an island where an arquebus

was discharged by one of the boat-party at a sea-bird and brought them their first glimpse of the Indians whose existence they had suspected from the heaps of shells and remains of camp-fires already encountered elsewhere. 'At the report of the arquebus', Sarmiento relates, 'some Indians who were in the hills on the other side of the water set up a great chattering. At first we took them for seals, until we saw them naked and their bodies painted, according to their custom (as we afterwards discovered), with coloured earth. And to discover what was afoot we got into the long-boat and went over to where they were. On drawing near, we beheld a number of them in a rough clearing, amongst them an old man wearing a mantle of sealskin, who was addressing and giving orders to the others; whilst on the shore, down by the sea, were fifteen youths, all stark naked. When we approached with signs of peace, they shouted at us and pointed eagerly in the direction where we had left the ships. As we drew near the rocks, we beckoned to them that they should approach so that we could give them what we had with us. So they came near and we gave them what we had. Sarmiento gave them two cloths and a kerchief, for that was all he had with him; the other soldiers and pilots also gave them some trifles with which they were well pleased. We gave them some wine which they spat out after tasting, and some biscuit which they ate; but they still remained mistrustful. For which reason, and because we were on a wild shore and in peril of losing our boat, we returned to our first mooring-place, beckoning to the Indians to follow us. When we had reached that spot, Sarmiento posted a couple of sentinels to guard the camp and also to try and seize some Indian who might serve as an interpreter. This they did with all diligence, and when one had been taken, Sarmiento embraced and made much of him, and collected one or two garments with which to clothe him. Then he was taken into the boat and we pushed off.'

The seizure of the Indian brought the boat-party little luck. Following a course due south, they entered a narrow inlet which Sarmiento hoped might open out into the broader waters of the Straits. After a few hours' sailing, penetrating deeper and deeper into the mountainous coast, they saw that they were in a fjord. Sarmiento and a few companions climbed ashore and scrambled up the steep cliffs until they were able to convince themselves that 'the channel had no outlet to the sea, though it was separated but a stone's throw from another to the south-west, and from an inlet to the east. This gave us much grief, but commending ourselves to God, we took possession in the name of His Majesty and raised a small cross, christening the mount Vera Cruz.'

There was now nothing for it but to make their way back to the ships. A sudden squall had carried away the mast, and the men were obliged to pull for hour after hour on the oars in the teeth of bitter wind and sleet. The Indian whom they had captured made his escape when they touched another island, and the native settlements which they encountered were abandoned, their inhabitants having evidently fled in fear at the sight of the mysterious white men. After the desolate monotony of endless, wind-swept channels flanked by craggy cliffs, and silent dripping woods, or by beds of seaweed whose long green tentacles lurked to ensnare their oars, the sight of the *Nuestra Señora de la Esperanza* and the *San Francisco* riding at their snug anchorage filled their hearts with thankfulness and delight. It was Christmas Eve, and they had been at sea in their open boat for thirteen days.

Sarmiento was now still as far as ever from discovering a safe approach to the Straits. His next expedition in the long-boat, he determined, should be a lengthier and more ambitious affair, and should follow the arms of the sea which wound inland, at the very foot of the snow-capped range which today bears the name of the Cordillera Sarmiento in his memory.

The third expedition in the long-boat started off on 29th December. On New Year's Day, after making good and uneventful progress and charting the labyrinth of islands and channels with his accustomed care, Sarmiento found himself land-locked once more in a deep fjord. After exploring other arms of the fjord in a fruitless attempt to find a clear channel, the party was forced to turn back. The men were now suffering from cold and exhaustion and rations were getting low. Soaked to the skin by the relentless rain, they had the greatest difficulty in finding fuel dry enough to feed their camp-fire at night. Only the indomitable will of their leader kept their spirits from flagging to despair. If there were dangerous and laborious tasks to perform, Sarmiento was always the first to set his hand to them. Time and again he would scale the lofty cliffs to scan a distant passage and note the ever-changing course of the channels, the infinite convulsions of the tortuously-indented coast-line; then he tells us, 'these things noted, we made our way down by so terrible a precipice that we were near dashed to pieces at every pace. But it pleased God to deliver us from this peril and from many others; to Him be given infinite thanks, Amen.'

On rejoining the *Nuestra Señora de la Esperanza* and the *San Francisco*, Sarmiento sensed that discontent was mounting amongst the Spaniards and found fresh fuel for his suspicions of the *almirante*. Whilst Sarmiento and the boat-party had suffered the pangs of hunger in their heroic search for the mouth of the Straits, Villalobos had seen fit to curry favour with the men who remained behind by increasing their rations. Soon, Sarmiento suspected, he would be able to complain that provisions were almost exhausted and that there was no alternative but to abandon the attempt to find the Straits and return to the nearest Chilean port. The General was moved to fury at these machinations. Handing over the keys of the store-room to one of his most trustworthy sailors, he ordered that

the old ration should be restored. The men greeted him with murmurs and mutinous looks; 'but he kept to his design, as favoured the welfare and safety of them all, for Sarmiento was ever resolved to die or to prevail with the help of Our Lord Jesus Christ and of his Most Blessed Mother Saint Mary. And to this end, seeing how great a voyage still lay before them, he made provision as God best gave him to understand, and turned a deaf ear to idle words.'

Villalobos and his men had not remained quite so shiftless in the General's absence as Sarmiento might have been inclined to believe. They had completed the fitting out of a two-masted brigantine, the command of which was given to the pilot Hernando Alonso. Sarmiento then called the *almirante* and the pilots to a council to decide on the course to be taken, and it was at length agreed that the ships should put out to the open sea and brave the violence of the tempests which they knew would confront them there, rather than commit themselves any longer to the bewildering waterways between the islands. The brigantine was hardly stout enough to stand the test. Buffeted by the great breakers which rolled in remorselessly from the open sea, her crew signalled to the *Nuestra Señora de la Esperanza* to take them on board before they were carried away and drowned. But the *capitana*, soon in difficulties herself, was unable to come to their rescue, and night fell as the fury of the storm steadily mounted. Sarmiento ordered the ship's lantern to be lighted and made fast as a beacon. At the first light of dawn, a fresh effort was made to succour the brigantine, and with patience, fortitude and good luck, the crew were hauled aboard one by one with the loss of only one life. But of the *San Francisco* there was no trace. Either the waves had swallowed her up, or else the *almirante* had taken advantage of the storm to abandon the *capitana* and turn home.

On the third day the storm abated and Sarmiento sighted land on his starboard bow. In gratitude for his deliverance

from the perils of the tempest, he gave the cape the name of *Espíritu Santo*, and the sheltered cove where he brought his ship to anchor, *Puerto de la Misericordia*. The headland was Magellan's *Cabo Descado*, and the broad channel which stretched away majestically to the south-east, the entrance to the Straits.

After taking possession of the island in the name of the King with the customary pomp and ceremony, the General settled down to wait the fifteen days for the missing *San Francisco*, as required in the Viceroy's instructions. He had always suspected that the *almirante* had no stomach for the voyage and would seize the first opportunity to abandon the enterprise. Now Sarmiento attributed his disappearance to deliberate defection. If we are to believe the testimony of more impartial chroniclers, it would seem that Sarmiento was doing his second-in-command less than justice. The same storm which nearly sent the brigantine to the bottom and gave the *capitana* a merciless battering drove the *San Francisco* away from the flag-ship and right down to the latitudes of Cape Horn. To their astonishment, Villalobos and his pilot – as Drake before them – could observe no trace of land, though geographers were unanimous in marking the mythical land-mass of *Terra Australis* on the map. But they had neither the will nor the means to verify a discovery which could have made them famous, and would in all probability have caused Spain to desist from the ill-fated project to fortify the Straits of Magellan. As soon as the fury of the storm had blown itself out, they turned the helm of the *San Francisco* to the north. Hernando Lamero, in his account of the voyage, declares that they then reconnoitred the Strait along a different channel from that followed by Sarmiento, but finding no trace of the *Nuestra Señora de la Esperanza* and yielding to the demands of an exhausted and almost mutinous crew, he set course for the nearest Chilean port.

The disappearance of the *San Francisco* deepened the dejec-

tion of the remaining members of the expedition, who would not even bring themselves to share Sarmiento's conviction that they were at last within the entrance of the elusive Straits. 'And if some appeared to agree with Sarmiento when he cheered them by declaring that they had already reached the Straits,' the General tells us, 'it would only last so long as they were in his presence, and afterwards each would believe as his heart prompted him; and this could not be met by rigour but with forbearance, for the poor wretches, soldiers no less than seamen, were suffering great hardships.' A laconic entry in the log adds that a soldier, one Bonilla by name, had attempted to foment 'a certain grave sedition' during Sarmiento's absence in the long-boat, but had been 'caught and punished as befitted the service of Your Majesty'.

The broad channel, where they now found themselves, offered little shelter from the gales which continued to beat down upon them and threatened to dash them against the rocks. Once again Sarmiento attributed his salvation to the miraculous protection of the Blessed Virgin, and vowed to preserve the ship's cable and hang it before the shrine of Our Lady of the Angels as a thank-offering. Once again, too, the indefatigable General leapt ashore to take possession of the land and to converse by signs with a group of friendly natives who showed them pieces of cloth and gave them to understand that they had received them from bearded white-men - possibly Drake's seamen, Sarmiento thought, who had come through the Straits from the East.

The fatigues and perils of the voyage were now beginning to daunt the stoutest hearts. 'In this port', Sarmiento writes, referring to the cove where they had put in to parley with the Indians, 'Pedro Sarmiento found himself in greater tribulation of spirit than at any other time past, for he beheld his men so weary and overcome with their labours that they were quite in despair of being able to discover the Straits, though they were

already within them; and since the cables which we had were so few and so worn and broken, it seemed to them that in such weather we could not but perish for lack of cables and anchors if we went forward. So they murmured together in factions saying that Sarmiento would lead them to their death, and that he did not know whither he was taking them and that it would be better to return to Chile for repairs; but they did not dare to say anything openly to Pedro Sarmiento, though he knew very well what was afoot and was doing what he could to set things to rights. And matters came to such a pass that the two pilots Antón Pablos and Hernando Alonso entered Pedro Sarmiento's cabin and said to him that he should bethink himself that he had done more than all the explorers in the world to come as far as he had; that the *almirante* had sailed back and left us alone; and that should some mishap befall us, we had no remedy but must perish where none would have remembrance of us; that we had no anchors, cables, nor rigging left, and that the weather was of such condition as had been seen, and that it was impossible to go forward without expecting the perdition of us all at every moment; that we should therefore return to Chile and thence send word to the Viceroy. Thus spoke Antón Pablos in the name of both of them, and I suspect of all the crew who had besought him to speak of the matter. Nor was this to be wondered at, for everything which he said was the truth, and all the men in the world would have shown the same fears in his place. But Pedro Sarmiento, resolved and confident in God and in His Glorious Mother to preserve and bring his Discovery, or else his Life, to a conclusion, replied to Antón Pablos that though it was true that they had done much in reaching so far, yet all this was nothing if they were now to turn back; that he marvelled that a man of such good determination should show so little of it now where it was most needed, all the more since he had so great confidence in him; that he should consider the mercies God

had vouchsafed them and have faith that He would not abandon them now but rather show them still greater mercies; and that these words were said to him in friendship, and that neither he nor any other should speak more of the matter. To which Hernando Alonso replied to the General that he should bethink himself well, for what Antón Pablos said was right, and that to seek to proceed further was to tempt God. At these words Sarmiento could no longer forbear and would have chastised him vigorously; but since they were spoken frankly as befitted an honest man and from the fear of drowning, he mastered his wrath and restrained himself, saying: "I neither wish nor dare to tempt God, but rather to trust in His mercy by doing everything we can with what strength we have"; that such words betokened lack of faith, that nothing further should be said of this matter, and that he who spoke again of it would be mightily chastened; and that this was my last word, so let them forthwith make sail.'

A week later, the *Nuestra Señora de la Esperanza* reached the part of the Straits which Sarmiento decided would make the best site for his future colony. Here the shore was wooded and well watered, and the land seemed more hospitable and fertile, the winds less boisterous, and the climate more kindly. After the sufferings and perils of the past voyage, its attractions must have been magnified to an unreal and misleading extent, for we find Sarmiento, usually so scrupulous in his observation, entering the most flattering claims for it in his log: 'Whilst we remained in the Río de la Posesión, the weather was warm, and a fresh southerly wind blew from eight in the morning until five in the afternoon; then it died down and the weather remained calm the whole night. The nights were still, the sky clear, the stars shone clearly and brightly, and the air was free of harmful dew. Here we saw parrots and *catalinas*, which are a smaller species of parrot but have a partly-coloured head plumage; we heard linnets and other birds singing their

quiet song, which is a sign of temperate land, and saw the tracks of lions and tigers . . . At noon the wind dropped; yesterday and today it has been as hot as in Lima during lent, or as Spain in July . . . This region is more temperate and enjoys better weather than anywhere else, which is evident from the fact that it supports a population of friendly disposition, and a great store of game and herds, both wild and domesticated. Felipe, the tall Indian who is with us, says that there is cotton, which is the best proof of a temperate clime, and cinnamon which they call *cabsca*.'

Here at last, Sarmiento no longer doubted, was the promised land of his quest. Here he would found proud cities, raise stately churches to the glory of God and His Blessed Mother who had so mercifully guided and protected him, and transform the virgin pampa into fields laden with golden crops. Some miles off towards the Atlantic lay the narrows where he would build the forts to guard the settlement against the malice of the King's enemies. On 13th February 1580, he once again took solemn possession of the Straits in the name of King Philip. Eleven days later he completed the navigation of the Straits, and, according to the Viceroy's instructions, set course for Spain to give account of his exploration to the King. A strong following wind, rising to gale strength, soon carried the *Nuestra Señora de la Esperanza* out of sight of land.

CHAPTER TEN

SARMIENTO IN SPAIN

When the storm which had blown the *Nuestra Señora de la Esperanza* out of the Straits at last abated, the Spaniards found themselves far out in the Atlantic with only the vaguest idea of their true position. To calculate their latitude by means of astrolabe or cross-staff presented little difficulty, but no sure means had yet been devised for reckoning longitude at sea. Sarmiento rose to meet this new challenge with his customary assurance. 'Our perplexity', he writes, 'was very great, for many times we expected to make the land, and yet we never saw it. Although we knew our position as regarded latitude, we were ignorant of our longitude. Sarmiento knew how to find it, but lacked an instrument for the observation. But necessity is the mother of invention, and so Sarmiento made a cross-staff with which to observe for longitude. With this instrument, by God's help, on 31st March, the General took the degrees of longitude by the full of the moon and the rising of the sun, and found we were 18° west of the meridian of Seville. From this it clearly appeared that the current had taken us to the east more than 220 leagues. Sarmiento informed the pilots of this, but as it is a study which they had not learnt, they did not believe it and deemed it impossible.'*

*Sir Clements Markham observes, in his edition of *Sarmiento's Voyages* (Hakluyt Society, 1895, p 164): 'This cross-staff must have been constructed to enable Sarmiento to observe an unusually large angle; so as to take the sun's lunar distance. The method of finding the longitude by lunar distance was first suggested by Werner in 1522. But this is the first time that it is

After a month and a half's sailing, the *Nuestra Señora de la Esperanza* reached the island of Asunción, skirted the coast of Sierra Leone, where many of the Spaniards fell sick from thirst and fever, and made for Cabo Verde. As they approached this island, they sighted two sail which at first they took for Portuguese vessels from Guinea, but which on closer inspection proved to be French corsairs, though they were flying the colours of Portugal. To the *Nuestra Señora de la Esperanza's* friendly though cautious signals, the pirates replied with a shot from an arquebus, to which Sarmiento gave answer in kind. The larger of the two was a fine, swift vessel which enjoyed a great advantage in manoeuvrability over the battered *capitana*, whose hull was now, Sarmiento tells us, 'one tangle of weed and barnacle', and whose two cannon were outmatched by the enemy's seven. In the exchange of shot which soon followed, Sarmiento had much of his sail and rigging shot away and his chin grazed by a ball, but managed to shake off the pirates and enter the port of Santiago de Cabo Verde without serious mishap.

The population of that city had observed the battle from the shore and feared it was nothing but a ruse to induce them to succour the newcomer by sending out a ship which could then be easily overpowered. Even when the *Nuestra Señora de la Esperanza* put into port, the people continued to regard her with suspicion and would not believe the men's story that she had made her way from Peru through the Straits, 'so they held their peace believing this to be impossible'. The wild and weather-beaten aspect of the Spaniards was indeed more likely to inspire fear rather than confidence. They must have looked as ruffianly and uncouth a lot as the Indians whom they carried aboard, for not only were they 'but indifferently favoured of feature, but sweat and powder of battle had left us ill-shaved; recorded that a lunar observation for finding the longitude was taken at sea. The next recorded lunar observation was by Baffin.'

and in sooth we were more eager for water to drink than to make ourselves pretty.'

The Governor also suspected that there might be plague on board and would not let the crew land until his physicians had satisfied themselves that there would be no risk to the population of the island - 'a pretty consolation for our necessities', Sarmiento adds bitterly. Even then the Governor continued to have his doubts. If the strangers were loyal Spaniards and not pirates in disguise, might they not have been given a secret commission by King Philip to seize the island for Spain? Cabo Verde was a Portuguese possession, and though Portugal was now nominally under the Spanish crown, the desire of the Portuguese to regain their independence was well known. As Sarmiento was later to discover, Don Antonio, the Pretender, was making active efforts to regain the throne.

The following day, Sarmiento and his men were at length allowed to land. Bearing crosses and sacred images in their hands, they went in solemn procession to the Church of Nuestra Señora del Rosario to confess and celebrate a mass in thanksgiving for their deliverance from the perils of the voyage. Then, after paying their respects to the Governor and the Bishop, the Spaniards set about the repairs to sail and rigging of which their vessel stood so badly in need. Whilst this work was in progress, Sarmiento gathered all the gossip he could about the movements of Drake and other English adventurers. He learnt how the *Golden Hind* had arrived safely in England, famous and laden with plundered wealth, and how other vessels were being eagerly fitted out for raids against the Spanish possessions in the South Seas. All these things he conscientiously recorded for the information of the Viceroy. Then, for the sum of 330 ducats, he purchased a small vessel to carry his despatches to Nombre de Dios, whence they would be taken overland to the Viceroy in Lima.

The townsfolk, meanwhile, were growing more and more

uneasy at the renewed signs of hostile activity on the part of the French corsairs who were now sailing boldly to and fro some three or four leagues off the shore with the evident intention of pouncing on any ship attempting to leave or enter the harbour. One day it was observed that they had been joined by a third sail. Rumour had it that this was a Portuguese ship bound for Brazil to which the corsairs were now giving chase. Galled at the thought that the French might make this capture almost within sight of a Portuguese city, the Governor besought Sarmiento to put out to sea and bring the pirates to battle, promising all the men and artillery he needed and the services of what other Portuguese and Spanish vessels could be hastily made ready.

So, 'for the honour of Your Majesty', the indefatigable Sarmiento accepted the new commission, gathered together his improvised squadron, and sailed off in pursuit of the French. For a day and a night he gave chase without succeeding in bringing them to battle. No sooner was he back in port than they again made their appearance off the city. Once more Sarmiento gave chase to them, and once more the enemy eluded him. This, at least, was the last that was seen of them. But for all his exertions, he received but scanty thanks from the islanders. 'Despite all this,' he complains, 'the only courtesy the people showed us was to sell us their goods at twice the price they were worth, talking even of preventing the despatch of the vessel for Nombre de Dios with the report for the Viceroy, and cheating us of some of the provisions we had bought from them.' But at length the *Nuestra Señora de la Esperanza* was ready to put to sea, and one Sunday in the middle of June, after nearly a month's stay in the island, Sarmiento set sail for the Azores en route for Spain.

At this point we meet with an entry in Sarmiento's diary which, in its laconic severity, reveals the harsh and absolute authority which he exercised over his men. 'On this same day,

the *alferez* was brought to justice and executed by *garrote* as a traitor to Your Majesty's royal crown, a stirrer-up of sedition and a bringer of dishonour upon the royal seal and standard, and because he sought to impede the discovery which by command of Your Majesty and in your royal service has been and is being made.' The *alferez*, whose function was theoretically to keep the royal standard and actually to carry out a number of duties largely of an administrative nature, was a certain Juan Gutiérrez de Guevara. He had played a prominent part in the various parleys with the Indians encountered during the voyage and Sarmiento mentions him in a number of passages without ever implying disloyalty or inefficiency. What then could have been the grave crime for which he was so suddenly and summarily executed? We are not told. Perhaps it was enough that he had in some way crossed Sarmiento's imperious will and for that must pay the extreme penalty. Two other men, whose guilt was deemed less, were put ashore on Cabo Verde as 'rebels and trouble-makers'.

The *Nuestra Señora de la Esperanza* had scarcely reached the Azores when a courier arrived from Don Antonio, the Pretender to the throne of Portugal, enjoining the *corregidor* to declare himself for his cause and throw off his allegiance to the Spanish crown. The *corregidor* hesitated to commit himself; he had already got himself into trouble by quarrelling with the Bishop, who had retaliated by excommunicating him, and he hoped to remain neutral until events on the Iberian mainland made clear where his interests lay. The people of the islands too were divided in their sympathies, though most declared themselves enthusiastically for Don Antonio. Sarmiento's position was now delicate. A powerful Portuguese fleet from the Indies put into port, and there was talk of seizing the *Nuestra Señora de la Esperanza* and confiscating Sarmiento's precious logs and charts which might be of great value to the Portuguese in the event of prolonged hostilities with Spain. But the

fleet included a number of Spanish sailors, with some of whom Sarmiento managed to establish contact and so get wind of what was afoot. On the pretext of coming aboard to stare at the wild Indians which Sarmiento had picked up on his voyage, they gave him news of the latest developments in the Portuguese fleet. Sarmiento kept his men on the alert night and day, ready to repel any surprise attack. Whilst this tense situation continued, none daring to be the first to lay hands on the small but formidable Spanish ship, a powerful fleet was seen approaching. Now it was the islanders' turn to grow alarmed, for it was rumoured that the ships had been sent by King Philip to seize and hold the Azores for Spain. When they drew near, however, it was found that they were a large treasure fleet on its way back from Mexico. Then the people, who did a flourishing trade exchanging their fruits and vegetables for Mexican silver, forgot all about Don Antonio and his blandishments and came out to welcome the Spaniards with smiles and fair words. Sarmiento took advantage of this change of mood to put out to sea, and after informing the general commanding the treasure fleet of all that he had heard and seen on the island, he continued his course for Spain. On Wednesday, 3rd August, 'by the mercy of God, we sighted the Spanish coast six leagues north of Cape St Vincent'.

The voyage thus safely completed may be reckoned as the most successful, if not the most ambitious, exploit of Sarmiento's career. In recognition of his services, the Viceroy, who had frequently commended him highly in letters to the King, settled a valuable *encomienda* on him in Peru (which he was never to enjoy), and though Sarmiento complained that the Council of the Indies was unwarrantably tardy in giving what was due to him, yet he at least had the satisfaction of seeing that the pilots and sailors who had completed the voyage with him received 'the most princely pay ever bestowed on Spanish seamen'. It was therefore with feelings of loyal gratitude, pride

in past achievements and hopes of still greater to come, that Sarmiento hastened to the court at Badajoz to kiss the King's hand, give an account of the voyage, and lay before His Majesty the great project for the fortification and colonisation of the Straits.

Sarmiento's impassioned arguments, backed by the earnest counsel of the Viceroy of Peru, seem to have speedily convinced the King. Philip sought the opinion of the Duke of Alba, reckoned the most distinguished soldier of the day, who replied that 'if the fortification of the Straits is possible, nothing in the world that I know of could be of greater importance in the service of Your Majesty', and that not a moment should be lost in setting about the task. Throughout the early months of 1581, the matter was the subject of discussions between the King and his Commander-in-Chief, and the details were worked out between the Duke, the Marquis of Santa Cruz, Sarmiento, and the foremost military engineers. At first it was proposed that forts should be built in the Straits and only a garrison of soldiers kept to man them. Sarmiento succeeded in convincing the others that it would be wiser to found a proper settlement, so that the forts could be rendered independent of supplies from outside. The best method of constructing the fortifications was exhaustively discussed and plans were at length drawn up. The engineers proposed the construction of a stout boom across the narrows, and Alba advocated that cannon should be mounted on barges to increase the field of fire of the shore batteries.

Sarmiento was still engaged in the study of these absorbing details when a bitter and unexpected blow befell him. He had perhaps too readily assumed that his evident understanding, experience, and enthusiasm in this matter of the Straits conferred on him an unchallengeable right to command any expedition which the King should see fit to despatch. But he counted without the calculations and complexities of court

policy. The expedition, an official statement curtly announced was to sail under the orders of a certain Diego Flores de Valdés, an Asturian who had much experience of commanding the Indies' treasure fleets. With the impetuous resolution we might expect of him, but in tones of dignified and respectful restraint which none but his sovereign lord could lay upon his proud spirit, Sarmiento took up his pen to crave the King's leave to return to Peru and to his private affairs: 'Having now completed all that was commanded of me in Lima, I understand that I am no longer needed for that which remains to be done. I therefore humbly beg Your Majesty to give me leave to return home to Lima or Cuzco, where I may be of more service to Your Majesty. Moreover, I can no longer support the expenses and necessities of my absence here, and must needs lose the little that still remains to me, for I spent all that I brought with me in chartering the courier ship in Cape Verde and in supporting and maintaining the soldiers and seamen who came with me, which has cost me many thousands of ducats of which I stand in great need for my return.'

The royal reply was to nominate Sarmiento Captain-General of the Straits, and Governor-Designate of the future colony. Sarmiento accepted the appointment with protestations of loyal gratitude (coupled with complaints about the inadequacy of the salary which went with it), but the arrangement was an unsatisfactory one as it meant that authority was to be virtually divided between Flores de Valdés and Sarmiento, men of widely differing temperaments, who were soon to clash in violent and open disagreement, to the inevitable jeopardy of the whole expedition. In addition, a third personage of equal rank and imperious character was to accompany them; Alonso de Sotomayor, a warrior from Spain's European wars, who had been appointed Governor of Chile and was to join the expedition with a force of 600 soldiers under his command. Once again, it seemed that the stage had been set for the endless

wrangles, recriminations, and intrigues inevitably resulting from a divided command. But the expedition which was now being prepared was immensely greater in size and importance than that which had sailed with Sarmiento to discover the Solomons or attempt to bring Drake to book. The consequences of disunity would be correspondingly disastrous.

The business of fitting out the fleet and enlisting seamen, soldiers, and colonists dragged on throughout the spring and summer and before it was completed Sarmiento found himself irreconcilably at loggerheads with Flores de Valdés. The Captain-General of the expedition appears to have been an easy-going, unadventurous, querulous soul who would far rather have continued the lucrative routine of conducting the Spanish treasure fleets across the Atlantic than embark on the thankless and hazardous task of navigating the treacherous waters of the Straits. Even the business of supervising the equipment of the fleet appears to have proved too much for him, and we find him writing to the King's secretary to complain that there were negligence and corruption on all sides, and that 'he was very glad to learn that Pedro Sarmiento was being sent down to look into things' — how quickly, when he knew the irascible navigator better, was he to change his mind! Flores de Valdés also protested that the pay offered to the pilots engaged for the voyage was 'very excessive, as is customary in Peru', whereas his own salary was only half what he was really entitled to. He took strong exception, moreover, to the appointment of Antón Pablos, who had staunchly seconded Sarmiento on the voyage through the Straits, on the grounds that he was a foreigner (he was, in fact, a Corsican in the service of Spain) and therefore unreliable. Perhaps Flores de Valdés had in mind the events of Magellan's famous voyage, when the Portuguese navigator flouted the King's order to act in consultation with the Spanish officers, and placed his own compatriots in key positions in the fleet, arresting and executing as rebels any who dared oppose him.

Sarmiento had no sooner reached Seville and set eyes on the ships selected for the expedition than he roundly declared that a number of them were old and unseaworthy and totally incapable of standing up to the terrible battering to which he knew they would be exposed. His reports to the King met with the reply that it was too late to start looking for replacements now, and that they must do what they could to make them seaworthy. 'Treating of this with Diego Flores in the presence of the president and officers of the Casa de Contratación',* Sarmiento tells us, 'and expounding the danger which those who travelled in them would incur, and almost prophesying their loss, I was answered, why should I worry, seeing that I had not to sail in them myself? A fine reply from a commander who could have had other ships, and did have some very fine, new and sturdy ones, only to relinquish and give them up, as I heard on good authority, in return for some fat bribes.'

Nor was that all. Everywhere Sarmiento found confusion, neglect, and corruption. Much of the rigging supplied was rotten, and the cables were flimsy. The biscuits had been made from flour which was going mouldy and had been adulterated with chalk. Stores were being sent aboard in such disorder that no one knew where to find anything; not a little of the cargo had, through craft or carelessness, been altogether abandoned on shore. A host of officials had their fingers in the pie and were pulling out rich plums. Even Sarmiento's furious energy was unable to bring order out of this chaos. His hands were full with drawing up and copying charts and supervising the making of the astrolabes, compasses, cross-staffs, and other instruments of navigation which they would need for the voyage. He also managed to find time to recruit some of the seamen and the various carpenters, masons, smiths, and other colonists who, with their wives and children, were to be the pioneer settlers of

* A sort of Board of Trade and Admiralty Department controlling shipping between Spain and America.

the Straits. The total number of those embarking on the expedition, including Alonso de Sotomayor's contingent of soldiers for Chile, was around three thousand. The fleet comprised twenty-three vessels – a formidable armada when we consider the handful of men and equipment which had sufficed Cortés in the conquest of the Aztec empire, or Francisco Pizarro for that of the Incas.

The expedition at length set sail from San Lúcar de Barrameda on 27th September 1581. Sarmiento and Flores de Valdés were by now in a state of open hostility which found expression in a series of tiresome and undignified incidents. Flores de Valdés refused to take Sarmiento or his luggage – which he complained was excessive – on board the flag-ship. The Duke of Medina Sidonia, who had come to speed the fleet on its way in the name of the King, had to patch up the quarrel as best he could. His one wish seems to have been to pack the whole troublesome expedition off to sea as soon as possible. The ships were towed out of the harbour until they could take advantage of a shore breeze which had suddenly sprung up, and the Duke despatched them 'regardless of weather and the advice of the seamen' (Pedro Sarmiento and Diego de Valdés seem for once to have agreed that it would have been wiser to wait until the weather had settled) and watched the fleet head westwards across the Atlantic. The vicissitudes and misfortunes of its voyage – could he but have known it – were to prelude the greater catastrophe which he, as supreme commander of the Invincible Armada, was to suffer seven years later.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE EXPEDITION SAILS

Within twenty-four hours, the breeze which had carried the fleet from San Lúcar dropped and a strong head wind began to blow up, threatening to drive the ships back to land. For over a week the expedition struggled on against the gathering storm, striving to gain the open sea by rounding Capes Cautin and St Vincent. But heavy seas and violent gales began to scatter the ships which were now in serious danger of being driven on the rocks. Flores de Valdés judged that the heavily laden ships would have a better chance of survival if lightened of some of their cargo. But Sarmiento, in vehement disagreement, 'seizing an iron hatchet in his hands, restrained him, and instead caused the portholes in the poop to be stopped up, for they were letting in much water'.

On 5th October, the storm had reached its climax and the Captain-General gave the order to put about. His aim was to make for the shelter of Cadiz Bay, but before they reached port in safety, five of his twenty-three ships had been dashed against the rocks and wrecked, and the lives of some 800 sailors, soldiers, and settlers lost. Panic had so spread amongst the survivors that special instructions had to be issued to the officers of the fleet to prevent anyone from landing, for fear of desertions, and to stop the plundering of the ship's supplies. Although Sarmiento set about these tasks with characteristic zeal, he was bound to admit that 'there was much theft and little punishment'. It is a tribute to his gifts of persuasion and organisation



A shipwreck.

that, in the midst of this general demoralisation, he was able to recruit a number of new settlers to take the place of those who had been drowned.

The three chiefs of the expedition, Flores de Valdés, Sarmiento, and Alonso de Sotomayor, lost little time in each sending off to the King their own account of the disaster – with what differences of explanation and emphasis we may well imagine – and detailed stock was taken of the grievous loss of life and equipment which had been sustained. Sarmiento records, with a touch of malicious satisfaction, that Flores de Valdés, as the chief on whom most responsibility lay, ‘was so overwhelmed by what had happened that he strove to be excused from continuing the voyage, on the pretext of a recurrent attack of an old illness; but Your Majesty exhorted and encouraged him until, though in fear and trembling, he at last

resolved to go on; though I for my part believe that he did so more out of fear of a sealed envelope which Don Francisco Tello said Your Majesty ordered him to open if he decided not to pursue the voyage.' The wretched Flores de Valdés then offered to place his resignation in the hands of the officers of the Casa de Contratación. But Sarmiento, no doubt fearing further delays in the despatch of the already belated expedition, told him bluntly that 'should he do such a thing, it would be a crime likely to cost him his head', and that he should wait to learn His Majesty's instructions. These were in due course received, and urged that the ships should be repaired and put to sea again, under their old officers, with the least possible delay.

Morale had been badly shattered by this initial disaster. Numerous desertions occurred and mutinies broke out on two vessels, one of them the flag-ship. Even officers succumbed to the temptation of selling on the quiet what they could of the ship's stores and equipment. One of these was caught red-handed by Sarmiento but let off by the weak-kneed Captain-General so that the culprit's only penalty was 'to forfeit the friendship of Pedro Sarmiento and join the fraternity of those who think only of lining their own pockets'. Sarmiento's unwelcome zeal and severity, coupled no doubt with the remorseless prosecution of his feud against Flores de Valdés and the general irascibility of his temper, seem to have made him so universally unpopular that he could not find a single officer who would lend him a launch to load the fresh supplies secured for his settlers. The Governor-Designate was obliged to hire a boat at his own expense to bring them aboard. Sarmiento even goes so far as to declare that the Captain-General, taking spiteful advantage of his difficulties, put out to sea and would have made off without him had not Sarmiento managed to overhaul him in a swift sailing ship chartered at great personal expense. 'Then Diego Flores', he complains, 'seeing him pay the master of this

ship, began to laugh as if exceedingly glad that Pedro Sarmiento should suffer toil and expense in the service of Your Majesty.'

On 9th December, two months after the first disaster, the expedition set sail once more and reached Cabo Verde without further mishap. The Governor of the island, remembering Sarmiento's services against the corsairs and seeing him now in a position of such authority and honour, greeted him as an old friend. He was still quarrelling with the Bishop, who sympathised with the claims of the Portuguese pretender, whereas he and most of the islanders had now deemed it more prudent to show themselves loyal subjects of the King of Spain. Every attention was therefore lavished on the members of the expedition, whose month's stay on Cabo Verde must have been the one agreeable interlude in a voyage fraught with every kind of hardship and peril. Resting in the gay sunshine of this fertile island and refreshing themselves with the abundance of rich and strange foods which their Governor-Designate liberally provided for them, the colonists, and especially their frightened womenfolk and children, could forget the horrors of the sea-voyage and abandon themselves to dreams of the favoured land in which it would soon be their good fortune to settle. Bull-fights and festivities of every sort were devised for the diversion of the Spaniards, and the royal standard was solemnly blessed by a somewhat reluctant bishop. There were even marriages celebrated, and some of the colonists found the island so much to their liking that they deserted the expedition and stayed on, their places being taken by volunteers recruited from amongst the islanders.

Sarmiento, finding any form of inactivity intolerable, busied himself with surveying the island and, in company with the engineer responsible for the proposed construction of the forts in the Straits, examined the existing state of the city's fortifications and studied how they might best be strengthened. The

results of his investigations, together with other confidential matters, were embodied in a document which Sarmiento drew up and gave to the Governor of the island for transmission to the King. The Governor in turn entrusted it to Flores de Valdés, who was preparing to send reports of his own in a fast courier to Spain. But, Sarmiento informs us, 'the said Diego Flores caused it to be lost, so as to prevent Your Majesty receiving anything from Pedro Sarmiento which should be to his service or satisfaction'.

As soon as the Spaniards set sail from Cabo Verde, their trials and tribulations started afresh. Fever spread through the fleet, causing many to die 'raving with pain in the bowels and stomach, and crying out for water'. Matters got worse as the equator was approached and the heat grew more intolerable, 150 of the expedition dying and most of those who had remained healthy falling ill. Sarmiento accused the Captain-General of luke-warmness in his efforts to prevent the disease from spreading and in caring for the wounded, and as if this were not fuel enough to feed his vendetta, engaged him in interminable political and theological arguments, taxing him with harbouring disloyal doubts as to the King of Spain's right to sovereignty in the Indies, and even going to the extent of reading him out passages from a famous bull of Pope Alexander VI.

The disaster which had befallen the ships on setting sail from San Lúcar had thrown out the expedition's time-table, and it was therefore decided that they should remain in the Bay of Río de Janeiro until the return of fair weather made it possible to continue the voyage to the Straits. Most of Brazil, like Cabo Verde, had declared its allegiance to the King of Spain not long before. But the capital of the country was still Bahía, whilst Río de Janeiro remained little more than a cluster of houses built on the lower slopes of the hills, on ground which had not yet been properly drained of pestiferous swamps. The town had indeed

only been founded fifteen years before, after the expulsion of the remarkable French adventurer Nicholas Durand Villegaignon (Sarmiento, invariably baffled by foreign names, calls him Acravirgallaon), who had established a stronghold on an island in the Bay, cultivated friendly relations with the natives, and threatened to found a permanent French colony in the heart of the vast but thinly-populated Portuguese possession of Brazil.

The expedition disembarked and prepared to make their winter quarters on the shore of this beautiful and spacious bay. A new and virulent fever now began to take toll of the Spaniards, causing the deaths of another 140, including a number of Sarmiento's colonists and the two Indians which he had brought with him from the Straits, and who had been baptised as Christians under the names of Felipe and Francisco. Others began to desert the camp for fear of infection, and Sarmiento was only able to master the plague by lodging the sick in the homes of friendly Portuguese colonists who tended them until they were well again.

Once his men had been restored to health, Sarmiento resolved, 'in order to avoid idleness, which is ever the cause of evil thoughts and ungodly works', to set them at once to work preparing things which would be of service to them in the Straits. There was wood in plenty round the bay – the hard, durable *palo Brasil*, which for years remained the colony's most valued product – and the Governor's permission was soon obtained, and Indian workers found, to fell the trees. These were then sawn into planks and boards from which material was fashioned for two large sheds which could be rapidly put together and erected in the Straits to serve as a store-house for the colonists' munitions and supplies. But other officers had very different ideas as to what to do with this valuable timber. Purchasing it cheaply, or even bartering away the ship's stores in exchange for it, they accumulated great stocks of the wood which they intended to take aboard and sell at a high price on

returning to Spain. Sarmiento was indeed convinced that they would make a pretext of the first storm encountered to turn their helms homewards and abandon any attempt at reaching the straits. His furious protests at length moved even Flores de Valdés to ineffectual action. It was then forbidden to take any wood aboard, unless for approved purposes, and those who had done so were ordered to unload it. But some of the Spaniards paid little heed to these orders and made only a pretence of obeying them, secretly re-embarking their forbidden cargo at night. Sarmiento loudly demanded their punishment; but little was done to bring the culprits to book, and they were left, as we shall see, to pay the penalty of their greed later. All that Sarmiento achieved by his protests was to make himself more unpopular than ever, until there was even talk of finding some way of killing off so cantankerous, uncompromising a character. The Captain-General made matters worse by commandeering some of the wood which Sarmiento had earmarked for his prefabricated sheds and ordering it to be used for other purposes, and would visit the workshops and shake his head gloomily over the exertions of the colonists, as if commiserating with them on the dismal fate which awaited them in the Straits. 'My poor fellows,' he would observe, 'to think that anyone could have told you such misleading tales! If only you knew where you were bound for; surely to perpetual exile in the most god-forsaken part of the whole world!' Events proved that Flores de Valdés' forebodings were not far wrong, but his public utterance of them was anything but likely to nerve the Spaniards to face the coming ordeal with a good heart.

On the return of spring, the expedition put to sea again and set its course for the mouth of the Straits. It now consisted of sixteen vessels – still a formidable armada, though considerably smaller than that which had proudly sailed from San Lúcar. Sarmiento complains, no doubt with good justification, that in-

sufficient advantage had been taken of their months in Brazil to re-equip and provision the ships, for much of the original stores had been frittered away by pilfering and unauthorised barter, and their loss had not been made good by taking on enough supplies of the *mandioca* and salted meats which could be obtained locally. The Captain-General, wearied to death by the endless round of quarrels, protests, and recriminations which the presence of Sarmiento inevitably occasioned, roundly refused to have him in the flag-ship. The Governor-Designate of the Straits was therefore obliged to embark in a slow and cumbrous ship called the *Begoña*. Disagreement soon broke out over the course to be set. Sarmiento had by now quarrelled with his old shipmate, Antón Pablos, the Chief Pilot of the present expedition, and denounced his charts as untrustworthy. We can well imagine the scene; the stormy anger of the man against the stormy anger of the elements, for Sarmiento describes it all with a fierce candour which does not even spare himself from ridicule. 'Pedro Sarmiento did not cease to cry out and protest, but since he was in one ship and the General in another (against the orders of Your Majesty) no one paid heed to him, and so there was no remedy.'

The fleet, it soon became clear, had put to sea too early, for the weather was still unsettled and strong gales blew up, nearly swamping the ships and tearing the sails and rigging to shreds, and 'filling the men with a mortal fear, and so terrifying them by casting them up to heaven one moment and down into the depths of the sea the next, that they fell to cursing Sarmiento for ever having reached Spain and brought news of the Straits to Your Majesty, uttering a thousand oaths against him'. The first victim in the fleet was the *Arriola* which sprang a leak and eventually sank with all hands. Sarmiento attributed her loss to the heavy cargo of *palo Brasil* which had been taken aboard her in defiance of orders. The Captain-General then summoned the pilots and senior officers to a council of war, and after a

violent scene between Antón Pablos and Sarmiento, who accused the Chief Pilot of criminally bad navigation and rejected any suggestion that it would be more prudent to turn back with the assertion that he would go forward 'so long as he had a plank of wood to sail on' (a prophecy which was to be literally fulfilled), he eventually won the others over to his view that it would be best to make for the nearest port, the estuary of the River Plate, to refit and await fine weather. This at least would bring the expedition several hundred leagues nearer the mouth of the Straits.

No sooner had this decision been taken than it was found that the expedition had now to reckon with a new and disturbing factor. A boat was picked up containing a number of Spaniards, amongst them Friar Juan de Ribadeneyra, who had set out for Spain bearing a report of the refounding of the city of Buenos Aires, and had been intercepted by a squadron of the English ships, the *Leicester*, the *Edward Bonaventure*, and the *Francis* (commanded by John Drake, a nephew of the Dragon) under Edward Fenton. The English had already heard something about the intended fortification of the Straits of Magellan by the Spanish, and pressed their prisoners for further details; how strong the expedition was in men, ships, and artillery, what officers commanded it, whether they intended to pass through the Straits to the Pacific, and for how many months they carried provisions. The corsairs treated their prisoners well, returning the papers which they had confiscated from them, except for a despatch written by Sarmiento for the Viceroy of Peru. Sarmiento proudly attributed this circumstance to the special animosity which he judged the English to bear him for his zeal in pursuing Francis Drake. Although Fenton had set his name to the Salvo Conducto with which he had furnished his prisoners in case they should fall into the hands of less scrupulous men, Sarmiento firmly believed that the commander of the English ships was none other than Francis Drake himself and that

he had assumed a fictitious name to mislead the Spaniards.

Knowledge that English privateers might be lurking somewhere close at hand deepened the Captain-General's distaste for the voyage still further. Though still far stronger than any enemy squadron it was likely to encounter, it was being steadily weakened by discord amongst its officers and by the successive loss of ships. The *Santa María* was the next to founder, the crew escaping with their lives only to desert, many of them, and seek their fortune on the mainland under a mulatto ringleader. The Captain-General decided to divide up his remaining forces, and to send three of the least seaworthy ships, with many of Sarmiento's settlers and supplies on board, back to Río and to sail on with the rest, three more of which he would leave in the River Plate with Alonso de Sotomayor's contingent, as the Governor of Chile had by now resolved that the fatigues of crossing the continent by land and making his way across the snowy Andes would be preferable to the hazards of trying to reach his destination through the Straits.

Sarmiento, as usual, protested vehemently against Flores de Valdés' decision. 'It wrung the heart to hear the laments of those poor settlers', he relates, 'finding themselves thus abandoned and defrauded of the hope for which they had left Spain. Pedro Sarmiento too was in despair at the sight of the loss of so much important equipment, which had been brought together at great toil and expense of Your Majesty, and with much labour of body and spirit on his own part, and at the cost of so much of the little wealth he possessed, whilst the whole world looked on wide-eyed to see what would result from so great an armada, the terror of the enemies of the faith of Jesus Christ and of Your Majesty. Not only were the settlers thus abandoned, but the General left behind in the ships the finest pieces of artillery destined for the forts, and the best store of iron and steel and tools. As far as they were able, Pedro Sarmiento and the *almirante* tried to transfer these things from one ship to another, but the

General did not lift a finger to help them, for in all things he desired that Pedro Sarmiento, seeing himself without colonists or supplies, should treat of returning to Spain, and as he saw that all this did not bend him thereto, he once more resumed the voyage, most fearful and sad at heart'.

The next loss befell the fleet before it had even cleared the harbour in St Catalina Island. This time it was the cumbrous supply ship which sank, with great loss of stores and artillery. 'But the General refused to stop, or to order others to do so, for he is a man who would not hold out his hand to his own father if he saw him drowning, and went on his way shedding ships one after another - now four of them all at once - with as much feeling as a stone.' On reaching the mouth of the River Plate, Alonso de Sotomayor left the expedition with his three ships, but not before Sarmiento had exchanged harsh words with him too. The Governor of Chile was of different mettle from the prevaricating weak-kneed Flores de Valdés. Though still only in his middle thirties, he already ranked as one of the most brilliant of military commanders, and the many scars gained in the campaigns in the Low Countries bore irrefutable proof of his valour in face of danger. Sarmiento had at first treated him with respect and even cordiality, but now that he showed signs of siding with Flores de Valdés, he overwhelmed the soldier with a flood of reproaches, accusing him of interfering in matters of navigation of which he was ignorant, and of advocating an infamous betrayal of duty.

'Never, Gentlemen', he declared, 'have I plighted my word, unless it was to redeem it in deeds. Our Lord the King has placed his trust in me and I have openly pledged him my service. I cannot fail him now that we have come so far in this venture, nor as a man of honour and repute, could I turn back unless tide and time compel, and even then after we had pressed on to the very limits of our might. So long as life and health remain to me, and a ship in which to sail, I shall not cease with

God's favour to go forward, as is His Majesty's will, until the voyage, or else my own life, is brought to an end. Had I sailed alone, as I did from Peru, I should already have done with one or the other, without pausing to winter. So I pray and demand that we go forward and finish what His Majesty orders us to do.'

So, with Sarmiento's parting words ringing in his ears – 'Through tempest and toil, death, loss and endurance, have been wrought the discoveries and deeds in the Indies which amazed the world' – Alonso de Sotomayor and his soldiers turned shorewards, leaving the five ships which were now all that was left of the expedition to continue towards the Straits. An unexpected spell of fair weather now set in, and the voyage continued uneventfully until the expedition reached the estuary of the river Gallegos. This both Antón Pablos and Sarmiento (though he never admits in his narrative to a mistake) seem to have taken for the entrance to the Straits. A reconnaissance soon revealed their error, and the ships sailed on to reach the real mouth of the Straits two days later. The Captain-General altered course and strove to enter, but was forced out by adverse winds and tides. A second attempt was made and failed. This was enough for Flores de Valdés. He had obeyed the royal commands; the Straits had been reached, he had done his utmost to enter, he had even lost a rudder in the process (at least, so he claims in his report to the King, though Sarmiento makes no mention of it) and was now surely at liberty to return.

Sarmiento was now beside himself with baffled rage. Here they were, after months of unremitting exertion, within sight of their goal – they could even see the familiar pillars of smoke from the bonfires which the Indians had kindled on shore – and they were turning back when 'the prize, honour and favours which such deeds would merit from God, no less than from the King and the world' were within their grasp! It was an 'ignominy and affront to the Spanish nation'. It branded them with —

'cowardice, weakness, and open villainy'. But though the Chief Pilot, the *almirante* and other bold spirits shared Sarmiento's bitter disappointment, there was nothing they could do to restrain the General from heading back towards Brazil. Sarmiento shouted and stormed in vain, urging them to take shelter in Gallegos Bay until the tempest had blown itself out. But it was all of no avail. His words were swallowed up in the howling gale and answered only by the roar of the waves which remorselessly tossed the ships ever further and further away from the Straits, until darkness blotted out the low contour of the Patagonian shore and the last grey wisp of smoke from the Indian fires.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE COLONY FOUNDED

The storm which blew them out of the entrance to the Straits scattered the ships, and when, one month later, Sarmiento put into Santos, the nearest Brazilian port, there was still no sign of Flores de Valdés. But in Santos grave news awaited them. The three vessels which had separated from the expedition at the island of Santa Catalina and been sent back to Río to refit, had put into Santos Bay only to find two of Edward Fenton's privateers revictualling there. At first the Spaniards had the advantage of them. The English crews were on shore but hurried back to answer the enemy's fire with such good effect that the *Begoña* was sunk and the raiders enabled to escape to the open sea.

This reverse increased the confusion and demoralisation of the Spaniards, and Sarmiento found that some eighty desertions had already taken place, whilst the officers were once more up to their old game of trafficking in the ships' supplies. He indignantly rebuked them for neglecting their duties and behaving like grasping traders, unworthy of the name of Spanish officers; 'and another time, let them not pretend to discoveries, which are the business of men who do not look for trade but for lands where others may grow rich'. What specially angered him was to find that the unfortunate colonists, whom he had been obliged to leave behind, were being shamefully treated by the officers, who had even cut off their rations, 'as if they were tigers or savages'.

Sarmiento collected his scattered flock around him once more and was preparing to set sail for Río, when the Captain-General at last reached port. Flores de Valdés saw in the news of the clash with the English privateers an excellent opportunity to rehabilitate himself, after his half-hearted attempt to carry out his mission in the Straits, in the eyes of the King. He set about busily strengthening the fortifications of Santos harbour, using much of the material originally destined for the forts which were to be built in the Straits, and garrisoned them with not a few of the troops and technicians on which Sarmiento had counted for his settlement. In his despatches to the King, Flores de Valdés claimed that the strengthening of key-points in Brazil was far more urgent than the chimerical closing of the Straits, for 'Your Majesty can rest assured that if this armada had not arrived here when it did, the whole coast would be in open revolt, for most of the residents are people who have been sent into exile and are therefore not to be trusted; furthermore, there is not a single town without its French or English residents, many of them married, who are constantly in touch with France and England, so that not a year passes without a ship coming here from those parts. I have also discovered many letters sent by Don Antonio's messengers . . . and if he should succeed in gaining possession of any of these ports, Your Majesty would not be able to expel him without great cost and expense, and even that would be of little avail, because the inhabitants of this land have much love and affection for the English and French on account of the many gifts they receive from them in return for provisions.'

As for the project of fortifying the Straits, Flores de Valdés dismissed it as dangerously impracticable. 'From what I have seen and learnt, I am of the opinion that to proceed with the forts which Your Majesty ordered to be built would never meet with success; firstly, because Your Majesty was not given a true — account of the distance between the narrowest parts of the

Straits, which is about one league, not counting the distance from the actual site of the forts, so that the artillery could be of little effect, for the current in the Straits is so strong, that any ship would easily pass without any harm being done to it. Secondly, the land on both sides is so exposed that there is nowhere any shelter, which, in so cold a land, is of great disservice to those who must dwell there, for it is without timber or water, the nearest being in Río de San Juan, hard by the second narrows, where I understand a settlement is to be made. For these and many other reasons, it would cost Your Majesty dearly to support them, and at great expense of human life, and all to no purpose.'

Though the Captain-General had shown a lamentable lack of enterprise and resolution in carrying out his difficult assignment, there was undoubtedly much truth in these observations. A skilful and determined navigator might, if fortune favoured him, pass through the Straits from time to time; the maintenance of regular communications and the sustaining of a colony on its shores was a most hazardous enterprise, and demanded a mastery over hostile elements which neither the small sailing ships nor the primitive methods of colonisation of that epoch could perhaps command. The miracle could only have been wrought by the sustained and almost superhuman fortitude of men like Sarmiento to whom it was 'an ignominy to see how the English thieves pass it (the Straits) and suffer it so easily, whereas the vassals of Your Majesty, who were wont to tear sea and land apart with their bare hands, now deem it impossible'. Nothing illustrates more eloquently than these impassioned words the passing of Spain's heroic age of conquest and discovery, the surrender of the conquistador's sword into the weak hands of a Flores de Valdés and the itching palms of his venal subordinates.

Once the expedition had reached Río, the definite break between Sarmiento and the Captain-General could no longer

be postponed. Flores de Valdés let it be known that he was returning to Spain, taking with him the best ships and many experienced members of the expedition. His second-in-command, the *almirante* Diego de Rivera, was to succeed him and assume responsibility for the transport of Sarmiento and his settlers to the Straits. Although Sarmiento had for long not been on speaking terms with his chief, he demanded an interview and remonstrated with Flores de Valdés in vain. The latter's mind was made up. He had had enough of this nightmare of an expedition, and more than enough of the overbearing cantankerous Governor-Designate. Flores de Valdés was going home. And so he set sail, Sarmiento indignantly relates, 'with great rejoicing, like one who had won the grandest victories in the world and was celebrating them in triumph.* The Governor Pedro Sarmiento stayed on, resolved to accomplish that for which he came, or to die and nevermore return to Spain or where others might set eyes on him again.'

At the beginning of December 1583 – over two years since the great fleet of twenty-three vessels had sailed proudly from San Lúcar in Spain – Sarmiento left once more for the Straits. Reinforcements had fortunately been received from Spain, and the expedition now consisted of five vessels and a total of 529 persons – soldiers, seamen, and colonists with their wives and children, many of them 'frightened and prostrate of spirit'. In less than two months of favourable voyage, they were again off the entrance to the Straits. Here the old story was repeated.

*His return to Spain, was, in fact, triumphal. On leaving Río, he had the good fortune to intercept and destroy a squadron of French privateers who had put into Paraíba to take on an illicit cargo of *palo Brasil*. Flores de Valdés captured the *palo* and other spoils which he took with him to Spain, where he enjoyed wealth and favour at court. When the Invincible Armada sailed against England, he was given the important command of the Castille Squadron, but proved so inept in the discharge of his duties that he was later deprived of his command and cast into prison. Sarmiento's estimate of his enemy's character does not therefore seem to have been so wide of the mark.

After penetrating the Straits as far as the second narrows, they were met by adverse tides and winds so strong that 'the moorings began to quiver like the strings of a guitar which had been tightened to breaking point, whilst the Indians watching us lit fires which sent thick clouds of smoke drifting over land and sea; then there arose a wind from the snowy mountain ranges of such great fury that, with the force of the current, our moorings snapped and we had to cast fresh anchors. The ships began to pitch and toss at their moorings so violently that no one aboard could stand on their feet but feared that the ships would be dashed to pieces beneath them and that they would be drowned; and so great was our distress that one of the frigates lost her second anchor and was driven by wind and tide out into the mouth of the Straits again.' The other ships followed suit, and fearing that they would be driven far out to sea, Sarmiento and the *almirante* decided to make use of what scanty shelter was afforded by Cape Virgins, at the mouth of the Straits, and disembark there without attempting to penetrate further.

On the afternoon of 4th February, the Governor-Designate, clasping a stout wooden cross and accompanied by Antón Pablos, Captain Gregorio de las Alas, and eight arquebusiers, embarked in one of the ship's boats and came ashore. The others soon followed; 177 soldiers, 48 sailors, 27 carpenters, masons, smiths and other craftsmen, 58 colonists, 13 women and 10 children; two friars and an *alcalde*. Andrés de Biedma, the artillery commander, also joined them with his 41 pieces of artillery. The pioneers had at last reached the site of their future home. They began to look around them and survey the unfamiliar scene with feelings of curiosity, hope and apprehension.

It was a prospect to daunt the stoutest heart. Behind them the grey-green waters of the Straits, now lulled to an unwonted calm, but sullen and menacing as if already meditating fresh onslaughts; in front, the bleak monotony of the Patagonian plain, broken here and there by a clump of shrubs stunted and

distorted by the incessant gales, or the smoke from some distant Indian encampment. Even these meagre signs of human habitation were to be dreaded. For was not this the land of giants, whose vast ungainly footprints in the sand had filled mariners with terror, and whose watch-fires had sent thick coils of smoke to mingle with the lowering storm-clouds at the Spaniards' approach? With their loose garments of fur and the silent shafts from their long bows, these Patagonian Indians seemed to be the accomplices of a hostile nature, rather than possible allies in the endeavour to bend her to man's will.

To the ecstatic gaze of Pedro Sarmiento, the forbidding present was already transformed into the sublime vision of the future. As he climbed a slight eminence, sword in hand, to plant the cross and unfurl the royal standard of Castille, the inhospitable pampa seemed to spread itself out beneath him clothed in the smiling verdure of fresh meadows; mansions, churches, palaces and fortresses ranged themselves in stately symmetry at his feet; the clouds above him parted to reveal a mild and azure sky, whilst the air itself grew laden with the scent of spices and rich fruits. Such was the domain to which, with tumultuous eloquence, he now laid claim in the name of the Spanish King — 'this land, dedicated by me to the Purification of Our Lady, with all its neighbouring, contiguous, and co-extensive lands, together with the Straits, formerly called Magellan and by me renamed the Mother of God, from the mouth and archipelago of the southern sea, to its mouth at this northern sea, both of them in fifty-two and a half degrees of latitude; together with all their isles, harbours, bays, rivers, capes, ports, promontories, coasts, and towns, their mountains and valleys, plains, highlands and lowlands, both to the south and north of the land, as far as the limits and confines of whatever provinces may be held by some other captain of His Majesty; the inland and ocean waters adjacent to these lands and co-terminous with them; hereby adding force to force, and

possession to possession to what I have already claimed in past years in these shores, taking and possessing them in the name of the most high, mighty, and catholic lord, Don Felipe, great King of Spain and its dominions, and of his royal crown of Castille and León, for his own use and that of his heirs and successors; in sign whereof I hereby raise this Cross'.

The Governor's mystic fervour cast its spell over the throng of weary sailors, colonists and soldiers as they knelt in reverence before the cross. The strains of the *Te Deum* broke from their lips and mingled with the shrill cries of the gulls which circled curiously overhead. They then rose to take stock of the site for their future city. There was little they could see to encourage them. The wind-swept cape offered no shelter, no timber for their houses, no springs of fresh water even. The Governor resolved to strike inland and find a more propitious spot. Forming themselves into a solemn procession, with lighted tapers in their hands and their Governor at their head, the Spaniards moved off across the pampa until reaching the mouth of a small gully half a league from the place where they had landed. Here, on 11th February, they founded the settlement to which Sarmiento gave the name of Nombre de Jesús. No time was lost in constructing the first wooden cabins and in planting the seeds and young fruit trees which they had brought from Spain.

The mood of religious and patriotic exaltation in which the Spaniards set about founding their first settlement was as short-lived as the calm of the sea. Before the vessels had unloaded their cargo, a fresh storm blew up and forced them to put out hastily to sea to avoid being dashed against the rocks. Those who had been left behind watched their departure with despair, crying out that they were abandoned and would surely perish. Sarmiento strove to rekindle their faith with his eloquence:

'Look around you and behold this great multitude of lands and provinces which God in his mercy has bestowed on you if only you have courage and constancy to seize his gift', he ex-

horted them. 'Take no more heed of the ships, for they have gone. From now on, our own stout arms must serve as friends and helpers, for others have we none. The work for which we were sent awaits us. There are houses to be built and food to be gathered in, for winter will not tarry. Come, let us set about our labours with a good courage, and God will crown them with success.'

The fiery words and indomitable courage of their Governor put fresh heart into the colonists. They answered that they were ready to obey and follow him to the end of the world; for he was their father, their one hope of salvation, without whose care they were doomed to perish. After three days' fierce struggle against wind and tide, Diego de la Rivera managed to make the shore once more. 'In this', records Sarmiento, who is seldom lavish with his praise, 'Diego de la Rivera acted right manfully, and as desirous of serving Your Majesty.' Stores were unloaded in haste, and it was decided to beach the *Trinidad*, which had been seriously damaged by the storms, and use her timbers for the construction of the new settlement. Sarmiento set about issuing orders in his usual imperious manner. Soon he was at loggerheads with Diego de la Rivera and a violent quarrel ensued. The same night, the Admiral, taking with him Sarmiento's old shipmate, the pilot Antón Pablos, set sail for Spain 'without so much as saying a word or leaving a message of farewell', and leaving the Governor with only the little *Santa María de Castro*. Nerves were frayed and endurance at breaking point after a voyage of unprecedented hardship and danger; who, but the irascible Sarmiento, could blame them? They had carried out the King's commands to convey the Governor, his troops and his colonists, to the Straits, and were at last free to return home. Seven months later, their three battered ships put into the Spanish harbour of San Lúcar de Barrameda. The memory of the quarrel with the Governor, but not that of the plight of his colony, had grown dim, and Diego de la Rivera

sent news of those things to the King and besought him to send relief to the benighted colonists.

In the meantime Sarmiento, indignant but by no means dismayed at the departure of the three ships, resolved to proceed with the next part of his project – the founding of a second settlement further inside the Straits. His own nephew, Juárez de Quiroga, was now in command of the *Santa María* and Sarmiento instructed him to sail with some of the troops and wait for him in the region of Santa Ana point and the San Juan river, whose suitability for settlement had favourably impressed him during his earlier voyage through the Straits. Though only some few score miles from Cape Virgins, the character and climate of this region was quite different. Instead of the seared and arid pampa, there was grassland green with constant rainfall; in place of stunted shrubs, thick woods of well-grown trees which would furnish excellent timber for building. One thing only was common to the whole length of the coast – the long and bitter winter, with its frost and snow, and its everlasting icy winds.

The Governor appointed Andrés de Biedma, a veteran artillery officer and a man of stout courage, as commander of *Nombre de Jesús*. Then, taking nearly a hundred soldiers with him and leaving the remainder to carry on with the construction of the new settlement, he struck off across country towards the agreed rendezvous in the second narrows. 'Pedro Sarmiento', he relates, 'went on ahead to explore the ground; where there were bays and inlets, he left his men behind so as to spare them fatigue, and went on with only a few to reconnoitre. Often he found stretches of sea and water round which a detour of four, six, ten or even thirty leagues had to be made; then he would go back to fetch his comrades, compass always in hand, for there was no sign of a track but only wilderness, and he was careful not to lose his bearings with reference to the Straits, for sometimes we had to go inland ten, twelve or fifteen

kilometres, to find a way through. And it is strange to relate that though we found countless signs and traces of human beings, both those of tall and those of short stature, yet in more than forty leagues we saw neither men nor smoke, though sailing through the Straits we used to see smoke rising from the land on all sides. So we deemed that the natives did this only to hide and conceal themselves from us, or to spy upon us by stealth and wait till we grew careless, so that they could attack us and slaughter us suddenly on the march.'

At length, after many days' march, they caught their first sight of Indians. They were a band of tall and brawny Patagonian braves clad in headdresses of ostrich feathers and mantles of guanaco skins. They carried bows and arrows, in the use of which Sarmiento knew them to be highly skilled, and they were accompanied by a pack of fierce hunting dogs. The leader had evidently picked up a few words of Spanish, for he 'came forward exclaiming: "Jesús, María, Cruz, Capitán!" which greatly amazed all those who could not tell what this new thing portended. Then the leader of the said Indians went straight up to the Governor, crying: "Captain - Ho, ho, ho!" raising his hands up to heaven and feigning to be highly pleased. Pedro Sarmiento embraced him and showed affection to him and all the others, by signs and one or two words which he knew, and with a few trifles of combs and beads which he carried with him for this purpose, and a coloured bonnet and a mirror, showing how each thing was to be used. All gave signs of pleasure and invited us to go with them to their settlements showing us by signs that they would give us food, rather than that we should continue on our way where others would be sure to kill us. And they made us understand by signs that our ships, which we were looking for, had already passed on through the second narrows, which gladdened us to hear, for we were beginning to be in doubt as we had found no trace of it. And to divert us, or perchance to fill us with alarm, this tall Indian

took an arrow of more than four palms' length, as slender as the bolt of a cross-bow, and after he had removed the flint arrow-head, he thrust the shaft into his mouth and down his throat into his stomach, until even the feather tips disappeared in his mouth, and drew it out again a little blood-stained at the tip – the most horrible sight that can be imagined – and then he gave himself a mighty slap on his chest, which resounded like the striking of a tambourine, and thereupon gave a great leap and terrible shout, right merrily, embracing Pedro Sarmiento once more, and made as if he would take leave of us.'

The Spaniards had not long to ponder what this macabre conjuring trick portended. Before they had marched on for another mile, a shower of arrows was loosed at them, killing one of the soldiers outright and inflicting grievous wounds on a number of others. Sarmiento rallied his men for combat and himself sought out the Indian chief who had given him such treacherous protestations of friendship but a short time before. A Spanish soldier shot the chief through the chest, 'Sarmiento likewise striking him with a sword thrust which felled him to the ground, and it was a wondrous thing to mark how, even whilst he lay prostrate, he still continued to draw his bow furiously, sending arrows whistling through the grass and almost cutting it down'. After the death of their formidable chief, the Indians were soon driven off, but the Spaniards were left weakened and demoralised by the encounter.

The party had set out carrying rations for only eight days. These they were soon obliged to eke out by foraging for shell-fish and whatever other sustenance they could gather on the way. Their clothing was equally scanty. There were no rugs or blankets, and only a few coats and shoes amongst them. The light Valencian alpargatas which were the best footwear which most could muster gave out after the first few miles of heavy going, and their owners were soon hobbling along barefoot. Sarmiento, who had observed the thick pads of hide with which

the Indians swathed their feet, fashioned rough shoes for them from old hats and wine skins, and from the skins of the animals they killed on the way.

For the first three or four days the Spaniards held manfully to the march, scouring the grass for an ostrich egg whose rich yolk would provide a meal for half a dozen of them, and shooting any red-skinned guanaco deer venturing within range 'which we then cooked in a stew-pot carried for this purpose by Pedro Sarmiento, who knew what was needful in unexplored lands'. In sheltered spots they would sometimes come upon an unexpected delicacy - a bed of wild strawberries - off which they would feast delightedly. For their camp-fires, too, Sarmiento discovered 'a quantity of black stone which, when it is thrown into the fire, burns like oil, longer and hotter than French peat'. The shore was rich in shell-fish, which the Spaniards were at first pleased to find contained pearls. Oysters and strawberries, pearls and coal - did not this land contain all the riches and luxuries of which the Governor boasted? But as the long march went on, and the burden of hunger and exhaustion pressed more heavily upon them, the men cast away the pearls in disgust that the shells contained so little nourishment.

Fatigue and hunger, coupled with their alarming experience at the hands of the Indians, greatly demoralised the Spaniards, and the march at length degenerated into a disorganised rout. Sarmiento lashed them with his tongue, mingling gibes with promises, threats with exhortation. 'Only hold out a little while longer', he besought them, 'and you will all live to boast how you once endured and triumphed over these present sufferings. Shall it be said that the King of Spain's men are no longer of the mettle of the warriors of old who would defy the Turks, the Moors, the French, and the English, and many other nations by sea and by land? To fail now would bring infamy upon my name, and, what is more, upon our King and upon our own country. Then would our enemies laugh us, and all Spaniards,

to scorn, saying that we set foot where none others dared only to become carrion for the vulture. So take courage, once more, Spaniards! Would that I could give you my own blood to relieve your hunger and sickness and necessity, then I would give of it right willingly a thousand times a day!

The expedition's rate of progress had now slowed down to a mere three or four leagues a day. Two of the five dogs which the Spaniards had brought with them had already been killed for food; the other three had disappeared on the march. Sarmiento now decided to sacrifice the seven goats which were to have been the progenitors of the colony's livestock. The wild roots and herbs gathered on the way sometimes proved as treacherous as the once friendly Indians. Some soft and innocent-looking green roots which the soldiers devoured in place of bread and relished for their flavour of chestnuts, caused such violent stomach pains that they seemed likely to die of poison. A fresh and more than usually violent storm blowing up from the west completed the men's physical and moral prostration, and they declared with one voice that they would rather let death overtake them there than go another step.

Sarmiento had no choice but to call a halt and let the men rest whilst he went on alone to see if he could find any signs of the *Santa María*. His refusal to admit defeat seemed, for once, to force hostile fate to relent. He had not walked on for more than two hundred paces before he caught sight of the ship's boat rounding the headland in search of his party. 'As soon as Sarmiento saw this to be the boat, he sent word to those who had been left behind; they, as soon as they heard the tidings, were filled with such joy that they immediately took fresh heart, rose up, and made their way, some limping, others crawling, down to the beach where the boat had now moored, with great rejoicing on all sides.' Food was distributed amongst the famished men and those suffering most gravely from wounds and exposure were helped aboard. Within fifteen days

from setting off from Nombre de Jesús they had covered no less than eighty leagues, though the actual distance from that settlement, as the crow flies, could not have been one-fifth as much.

The Governor allowed himself little rest. He was soon off again to reconnoitre a new site for his second settlement, and picked on one not far from the point where they had met the boat. It was a sandy bay which, unless a due easterly gale was blowing, would offer fair protection to shipping. There was timber and fresh water there in abundance. On the level ground between two small rivers, to which he gave the names of San Juan and San Alifonso, he resolved to found his second settlement christened, in honour of the King, Rey Don Felipe. Here the Straits were narrow, and the coast of Tierra del Fuego looked deceptively near in the rain-washed air. Behind them the foothills of the great Cordillera of the Andes stretched away endlessly to the north – literally thousands of miles of snow-capped peaks leading to the plateaux of Peru, the ancient Inca capital of Cuzco, and beyond. Never before, Sarmiento reflected, had such a far-flung empire been won for a monarch by his devoted captains.

The future metropolis of the Straits was founded with the accustomed ceremonies on 25th March 1584. The Governor was the first to set his hands to the work, carrying loads of timber on his back like the humblest soldier. Soon the stout walls of the church began to rise, with space enough between them for the whole population to gather together, and complete with bell and belfry. The Governor's house hard by was built on the same ample scale, with walls a hundred paces long and roomy lofts to store the provisions which the colony hoped to receive. The main square was laid out with care, the other chief buildings around it – a simple dwelling for the monks, the hospital, the forge, the cabins of the principal officers and settlers, and, inevitably, the gaunt frame of the gallows. The whole settle-

ment was enclosed by a stout wooden palisade with two entrances to it; one facing inland, through which the logs were dragged for the construction of the town, the other opening out onto the little harbour. The cannons were dragged ashore and placed in position; some to protect the gates, others in the block house built to command the Straits.

But the first challenge to the Governor's authority came not from the sea but from within. Whilst he was out exploring the surrounding countryside, a group of malcontents conspired to kill the Governor, seize the ship and set sail for Chile. Sarmiento got wind of the plot in time, arrested the conspirators and beheaded one Antonio Rodriguez, the ringleader, after a summary court martial. Greater trials were soon in store for the colony. Already the winter was upon them. For fifteen days running the snow fell, paralysing all activity and covering the world with its polar mantle. Now even the foraging for edible roots and shell-fish had become impossible. The Governor took stock of his meagre stores. They amounted to 700 measures of flour, twelve barrels of biscuit, thirteen casks of wine, one of salted meat, one of bacon and two of tunny fish – both half rotten – and a few sacks of beans. That was all. Yet this must somehow suffice for the long winter. Seeds had been planted; and if they could only survive the frosts, there would be vegetables and grain later in the year. Vines had even been planted beyond the palisade, for Sarmiento still clung stubbornly to the belief that the interior of the land, at all events, enjoyed a warm, temperate climate. He was for ever finding signs which bore out this hope; 'flocks of birds very plentiful; this means that there must be much fruit in the hills, and what is more to be noted – flights of green parrots, which have hitherto only been seen in warm climes'.

By the middle of May, despite the mounting snow and the dwindling rations, the Governor decided that Rey Don Felipe was sufficiently established to be left to its own resources. He

resolved to revisit his first settlement, taking with him some of the pieces of artillery with which he thought to fortify the narrows, and see how his pioneers were faring.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

— AND ABANDONED

Early on the morning of 24th May 1584, Sarmiento set sail and was carried down by a strong and favourable current until reaching the little settlement of Nombre de Jesús at noon of the following day. Two Spaniards came aboard to discuss arrangements for evacuating the sick to Rey Don Felipe and to give the Governor news of the colony. It was the same grim story of suffering and discontent as at Rey Don Felipe. Rations had given out, and the colonists were barely managing to keep body and soul together by dint of foraging. Despair had driven some of the men to mutiny, but Andrés de Biedma had quelled it and executed the ringleader.

Whilst the Governor was pondering these gloomy tidings, a sudden gale blew up which snapped the *Santa María's* moorings and began to force her out of the Straits. Shaken with impotent rage and grief, Sarmiento could not contain his tears. Inexorably, and 'without even being able to take leave of his friends and comrades', he was driven out, as Diego de la Rivera before him, into the pitiless ocean. The colony which he had founded in the teeth of such odds and was keeping from destruction by the force of his indomitable will was left without its Governor. He was never to set eyes on it again.

Seeing that the contrary winds showed no signs of abating and that there was thus no chance whatsoever of making their way back into the Straits, Sarmiento reluctantly decided that there was nothing for it but to set course for Brazil. There he

resolved to refit and collect fresh supplies for the colony. The *Santa María* ran before the wind until calmer weather made it possible to turn her helm towards the shore and make for the estuary of the River Plate. This they reached without mishap, and thence made their way with great caution – for they had now no anchors and no cables – keeping close into the shore until reaching Santos.

They made port only just in time. Rations had been reduced to a handful of manioc a day, and the starving men, some of whom were going blind or losing their toes through frost-bite, had already devoured the ship's cats and even the leather casings from the pumps. The people of Santos showed little readiness to come to their assistance, and Sarmiento had to sell some of his clothes, and 'even his thread for sewing and his combs', before he could get provisions. In Río they received a better reception. Diego de la Rivera had left there the supplies that he had been unable to unload in the Straits, and work had even been started on a ship which was to bring them down to the Straits under an experienced pilot. The Governor of Río proved both courteous and helpful and managed to supply Sarmiento with new anchors and other needful things. But to find supplies of cloth and other essential equipment for his suffering colonists Sarmiento would have to look further afield. He therefore decided to sail on to Pernambuco, taking with him a cargo of *palo Brasil* with which to pay for his purchases. Knowing that this might take time and further delay his return to the Straits, he sent off a barque, under the command of Diego de la Rivera's pilot, to bring the people an emergency supply of manioc and cheer them with news of more provisions to come.

The voyage to Pernambuco was uneventful and Sarmiento was able to get what he needed there without further difficulty. But his good fortune was not to last long; like Don Quixote, the Governor of the Straits was born for trials, hardships and

misadventures in a hopeless quest. On his way back to Río, just as he was about to enter the great bay, 'a sudden squall blew up which cast the ship on the rocks and dashed it to pieces, so that it began to sink at once. Then Pedro Sarmiento, launching the two boats, embarked in them all the men who were either sick or unable to swim, so that they might be saved; he himself stayed on board last of all, with the mercy of God, and in company of some who knew how to swim, so that they could help each other. But when the boats reached shore, they too were dashed to pieces before they could return to the ship, and so he was left without any human succour and nailed two boards together to form a raft to which he and one of the priests clung. And when they were carried clear of the ship, the sea was so high that it plunged over them a thousand times. Pedro Sarmiento clung to the raft and suffered many wounds to his body and feet through the nails, and was abandoned by all the swimmers except for one of his negroes; and God of His infinite mercy, was pleased to save him. To Him be thanks for evermore. Everything on board the ship was lost except for some small pieces of artillery and one or two casks of wine, the ship itself being soon in fragments.'

Had not Sarmiento once sworn to Diego Flores de Valdés that he would go forward to the Straits, 'so long as he had a board left to sail on'? It seemed that a malicious fate had indeed taken him at his word. But even in this wretched plight his spirit was not crushed. 'Then Pedro Sarmiento, though wounded himself, beholding the distress of his comrades and that some of them had been drowned, began to console them as best he could. That day and the following night they remained where they were without anything to eat or drink, for there was nothing, and he sent word to some monks who were four leagues away, beseeching them to come to their succour; and one of them came with some manioc and some Indians, which gave them much consolation.' The good monks looked after

the castaways and sent word to the Governor in Río who despatched a gentleman to fetch them back to the city. There they were courteously received by the Governor, whom Sarmiento, still faithful to his one overmastering obsession, forthwith asked for help in fitting out a new expedition to the Straits.

The best which the Governor of Río could do was to produce a wretched craft of little more than fifty tons, a small supply of manioc and jerked beef, a few rolls of rough cloth and some barrels of gunpowder purchased from a local merchant (to whom, so Sarmiento claimed, they had previously been sold by Flores de Valdés' venal subordinates), some tools, and one of the cannon salvaged from the wreck of the *Santa María*. Even these meagre supplies were destined to be denied the struggling colonists. On 13th January 1585, Sarmiento set sail once more from Río, but after a month's favourable sailing, he encountered 'a tempest of west and south-west winds, so terrible that we deemed it to be the most fearful we had yet seen, all the elements being jumbled together like a tangled skein of wool, whilst thunder and lightning played about our heads, so low and horrible, that the sea seemed to have been rent into a fiery abyss, leaving us all dazed and bereft of sense, so that we looked upon one another without recognising ourselves, whilst every wave engulfed us'.

For fifty-one days the storm raged. Almost all the precious stores were carried away or jettisoned, and the Spaniards counted it a singular mercy when they found themselves back once again off Río. There they put in, 'ragged and barefoot, and the ship pounded to pieces', to discover that the barque which had sailed for the Straits a month before them had also been forced to turn back. This intelligence caused Pedro Sarmiento 'well-nigh to burst with rage . . . but considering that neither prudence nor human strength can repair the sudden and manifold chances of this world, he conformed himself to the will of God, whose works and secrets are wondrous beyond our

understanding. Then he caused a number of masses to be said for us all, and set about refitting the ship; to pay the workmen he sold even his last shirts . . . The few bales of cloth which had not been cast overboard were also sold and provided enough money to issue his men with rations of fresh beef and fish, mandioc, and wine made from sugar syrup.'

But it needed more than a few square meals to restore the spirits of men now tried beyond the limits of human endurance and rally them to the goal which Sarmiento inexorably held up before them. 'Amidst these calamities', he relates, 'there befell one more, and that not the least of them, which was that the sailors, though regaled with food, pay, and clothes so far as was possible, could no longer suffer the thought of enduring aught else and took counsel amongst themselves how to take Pedro Sarmiento and kill him. Learning of what was afoot, Pedro Sarmiento seized the chief mutineer and placed him below decks. The next day, whilst Pedro Sarmiento was at mass, the mutineers broke into the cell and released him. When Sarmiento learnt of this, he hastened back to the ship with his servants and found them under arms in open and shameless rebellion, refusing to serve Your Majesty and giving signs of wishing to take over the ship and flee. Then Sarmiento reasoned with them gently, to conciliate them, but all to no effect, seeing which, he had recourse to force and drew his sword, at the point of which he drove them below deck. He wounded the ringleader and thrust at the pilot, who was the secret instigator, taking him prisoner. Then he set about the others, who numbered twenty-three or twenty-four, disarmed them, and reduced them until they became gentler than butter. The most guilty he exiled to the fort of San Vicente, and when the others stood waiting their punishment, he stayed judgment and pardoned them, dealing kindly with them, for it was no time for harshness, but rather for mercy, else might he find himself alone and without sailors, for he was mindful of what trials

had driven them to despair. And invoking the example of Diego Flores, they declared that since he had returned home, so did they now wish to return. Likewise there fled away a pilot and an ensign whom Diego de la Rivera had left behind for the voyage back to the Straits'.

In his attempt to return to the Straits, the Governor had suffered shipwreck and the battering of innumerable storms, and the loss of precious supplies which he knew he could scarcely hope to replace locally. Now he was faced with the physical and moral prostration of his men. To find fresh ships, stores and crews wherewith to resume the desperate venture seemed scarcely possible. His only hope was to obtain assistance from Spain. He had already despatched letter after letter, all so far without effect. 'So many are the letters which I have addressed to you and to His Majesty', he wrote to Antonio de Eraso, the King's secretary, 'during the last year, that I am persuaded that if they had all reached you, you must have grown weary of my importunity and withheld your reply that haply I might cease my complaints and petitions. If by November, which is the latest date for embarking on the voyage, no help comes, my suspicions will have been confirmed.'

These months of fruitless waiting, his men sullen and mutinous and his own sense of abandonment deepening daily, must have been intolerable to Sarmiento's restless spirit. The Governor of Río, Salvador Correa, seems to have been a loyal and kindly soul but too weak to exert his authority on the unruly Portuguese settlers. The rapacity and cruelty with which they carried out their slaving raids into the interior and which the Governor was powerless to control filled Sarmiento with particular indignation. In a letter to the King, he has left us a description of one such raid, led by the Governor's own brother, in which ninety Indians were seized and led off with promises that they would be treated as hired workers. But the slavers ignored their captain's pledge and forthwith 'divided up



Spaniards carrying off Indian slaves.

the Indians amongst themselves, one taking the husband, the other the wife, and others the children. It is pitiful to see how inhumanly they treat them, and the suffering and distress of the Indians themselves. It will also have a most harmful effect on the Indians who have not yet been subdued and who, seeing what happens to such as these, will never lay down their arms or believe the word of a Christian, whilst other Indians will take flight. The slavers seek to justify themselves by saying that the Indians tried to make off and therefore had to be divided up among themselves. Once this had been done, each went his way with the Indians he had seized and was free to kill them or do whatever was his will with them. Such excesses are grievous to the conscience and a great offence against justice and the authority of the Governor. Once again I affirm to Your Majesty that the slavery introduced into this land has made

everything confusion and is done with an ill conscience and with many harmful and abominable deeds, so that within but a short time the land will be left without natives, as has happened in Santo Domingo, Cuba, Jamaica, and Puerto Rico . . . For the love of God, let Your Majesty give this matter your concern and set your royal conscience at rest by commanding that this be put right, for it is for the good of all, both for the welfare of the estates and of men's souls.'

Such words could well have been written by Bartolomé de las Casas, the champion of the Indians whom Sarmiento had once bitterly opposed, and might surprise us from the pen of one who had himself been active in many an expedition against the Indians in the Solomon Islands and in Peru. Sarmiento was a hard but not a heartless man. The perils and privations amidst which his life was spent seem to have developed in him a fellow-feeling for the defenceless, the forsaken, the suffering. He kept his venom for the powerful and privileged who stood between him and the realisation of his heroic designs, betraying – as he averred – the responsibilities of their high office. For the slaves of Brazil or his own unfortunate colonists he could show a deep and burning compassion.

No answer came, as far as we know, to Sarmiento's plea for a more humane treatment of the Indians. Nor did there come an answer to his insistent demands for supplies and reinforcements for the Straits. There was nothing for it but to return to Spain. So, after spending the first months of 1586 in further fruitless waiting, Sarmiento finally embarked with twenty other Spaniards in a small and wretched vessel – the best he could come by – and turned his back for ever on the New World. He would plead the cause of his benighted colony in person before the King.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

RALEGH'S PRISONER

For the first month or so the voyage to Spain passed uneventfully enough. Then, on the morning of 11th August, two sails were sighted approaching between the islands of San Jorge and Graciosa in the Azores. As ill luck would have it, they were ships belonging to Sir Walter Raleigh, both faster and better armed than the Spaniard. The encounter which ensued, as described by John Evesham, Gentleman, can be read in Haklyut as follows:*

'The 10th of June 1586, we departed from Plimouth with two Pinases, the one named *The Serpent*, of the burden of 35 tunnes, and the other the *Mary Sparke of Plimouth*, of the burden of 50 tunnes, both of them belonging to Sir Walter Raleigh, knight; and directing our course towards the coast of Spaine, and from thence towards the Isles of the Azores, we took a small barke laden with sumach and other commodities, wherein was the Governor of S. Michales Island, being a Portugal, having other Portugals and Spaniards with him. And from thence we sailed to the island of Graciosa, to the Westward of the Island of Tercers, where we descried a sail, and bearing with her we found her to be a Spaniard. But at the first not greatly respecting whom we tooke, so that we might have enriched ourselves, which was the cause of this our travaile, and for that we would not be knownen of what natione we were, we displayed a white silke ensign in our maine toppe, which they

*Everyman edition, vol 4, p 278.

seeing, made accompt that wee had bene one of the king of Spaine's Armadas lying in waite for English men of war; but when we came within shot of her, we tooke down our white flagge and spread abroad the Cross of S. George, which when they saw, it made them to flie as fast as they might; but all their haste was in vaine, for our shippes were swifter of saile than they, which they fearing, did presently caste their ordinance and small shot, with the draft of the Straits of Magelan into the Sea, and thereupon immediately we tooke her, wherein we also tooke a Gentleman of Spaine, named Pedro Sarmiento, governor of the Straits of Magelan, which said Pedro we brought into England with us, and presented him to our soveraigne Lady the Queene.'

In his own account of the capture, Sarmiento adds some details of a more sombre sort. First, he tells, us, 'he threw overboard his papers containing secrets of navigation and discoveries, tidings, warnings, narratives, reports and declarations pertaining to the voyage to the Straits, notably a great book full of descriptions in painting and geographical art concerning the lands newly discovered and charted, together with written accounts, to prevent them falling into the hands of the enemy who might make use of them to harm our shipping. The only papers saved were some which were in cypher and therefore could not be understood, thanks to which some of what was lost has been pieced together again, whilst the rest, with the aid of God, may be made good in the course of time.' After their resistance had been overcome the Spaniards were then put to the torture to make them disclose whether they had knowledge of any treasure. Sarmiento was 'captured and relieved of the little that he possessed. They were then all taken on board the English flagship where they were once again stripped naked and put to such torture by fire and stripes, the knuckles and tips of their fingers being crushed to make them confess whether they had any hidden silver or moneys.'

These drastic methods failing to produce any indication of hidden treasure, Captain Whiddon, the commander of the ships, was on the point of releasing the Spaniards and letting them go their way, when the Portuguese pilot, either to ingratiate himself or to pay off some old score against Sarmiento, informed Captain Whiddon of Sarmiento's real identity, even exaggerating his importance for greater effect. The English thereupon decided to take Sarmiento, the pilot, and two other Spaniards to England and hand them over to Raleigh.

At the end of August, *The Serpent* and the *Mary Sparke* reached Plymouth, where Sarmiento was kept confined whilst Raleigh was informed of the circumstances of his capture. Whilst awaiting his captor's pleasure, he learnt that John Hawkins ('Joan de Aquines' he calls him) was assembling a powerful squadron to intercept the Spanish treasure fleet returning from the Indies, and that Cavendish ('Telariscandi') was preparing an expedition to enter the South Sea and emulate the exploits of Drake.* What bitter humiliation it must have been to find himself, after so many vicissitudes, in the enemy stronghold and to catch glimpses of ships being fitted out against Spain's possessions – against even the colony in the Straits which he had founded in order to put a stop, once and for all, to any such raids! Whilst in Plymouth, Sarmiento does not seem to have been kept under very strict supervision and he found the means not only to discover what was afoot but even to send a secret report to King Philip on the privateers' intentions which he entrusted to the master of a Venetian ship sailing for Lisbon. But this vessel, as if infected with Sarmiento's own luck, suffered shipwreck off Cape Finisterre.

*Cavendish's expedition had, in fact, actually set sail a month before Sarmiento reached Plymouth. Sarmiento may possibly have glossed over this fact in his report in order to lend colour to the assertion which he makes elsewhere that what finally decided Cavendish to venture through the Straits was the knowledge that their redoubtable Spanish Governor was not there to defend them.

Word was at last received from Sir Walter Raleigh that the prisoner should be sent up to join him at the court. Sarmiento was escorted first to Hampton Court, then to Windsor, and was received with every mark of courtesy. Raleigh treated him more as his guest than as his prisoner, seating him in the place of honour at his side and conversing with him in Latin. Comfortable lodgings were provided for him, and an English gentleman who spoke Spanish was detailed to accompany him and attend to his wants. Such marks of attention could not but excite the envy and suspicion of certain factions at court, notably that of Don Antonio de Ocrato, the Portuguese pretender who had taken refuge in England and cherished hopes of regaining his throne from King Philip with the Queen's help. Don Antonio peevishly complained to the Queen at the favour shown to the Spanish prisoner, 'saying that Pedro Sarmiento called him Bastard* and that since he was under her protection, she was under the obligation to avenge the slight; and that if this were not done, he would serve him such a turn which would be like to cost him his life. On this, the Queen flew into a rage and commanded that Sarmiento should be cast into prison. But Walter Raleigh ("Guaterales") spoke to the Queen to such effect that the hatred she harboured against him was turned against Don Antonio, for which cause he sought to kill Pedro Sarmiento'.

This intrigue no doubt tended to arouse Elizabeth's interest in her favourite's distinguished captive and she decided to receive him in audience herself. Sarmiento tells us that he remained for an hour and a half in cordial converse with the Queen, exchanging civilities with her in Latin, 'in which tongue the Queen is very elegant'. What passed at that audience we are not told. Sarmiento prudently adds that it was for his master's ears alone and that he would deliver him a full report of it in person when he reached Spain. It may be that Elizabeth wished to take

* The Pretender was, in fact, a natural son of Don Luis, brother of King John III of Portugal.

advantage of Sarmiento's return to Spain to convey to Philip one of her peace overtures. Sarmiento adds that he was also received by Lord Burleigh and Lord Howard of Effingham, who treated further of the matters raised by the Queen. 'Which was done and arranged', he cryptically concludes, 'with other matters of moment, and the granting of a passport and the Queen's grace to proceed to Spain and, if needful, to return to England, for the purpose which is known.' Raleigh then presented him with money and jewels to the value of 1,000 escudos, loaned from a rich Portuguese merchant who had already done good service by warning Sarmiento of the Pretender's designs on his life, and he left London on 30th October 1586, 'having received in that country much courtesy from all manner of persons'.

Of the personal message which Raleigh had requested Sarmiento to convey to his sovereign we can learn indirectly from the reports sent to Philip by Mendoza, his Ambassador in Paris, after Sarmiento had passed through the French capital. Sarmiento must have told the Ambassador that the Queen's favourite seemed in favour of peaceful relations with Spain, and that he would not countenance Don Antonio's attempts on the Portuguese throne, and furthermore, that Raleigh was prepared to sell one of his own excellently armed ships to the Spanish King at a reasonable figure. 'I am assured that he is very cold about these naval preparations', Mendoza wrote to Philip, 'and is trying to dissuade the Queen from them. He is much more desirous of sending to Spain his own two ships for sale, than to use them for robbery.' This intelligence evidently pleased Philip, who replied through Mendoza that 'his aid would be highly esteemed and adequately rewarded'. On second thoughts, however, Philip began to have doubts as to Raleigh's good faith and to fear that his offers might cloak some sinister design. He therefore warned his Ambassador: 'As for his sending for sale the two ships he mentions, that is out of the

question, in the first place to avoid his being looked upon with suspicion in his own country, in consequence of his being well treated whilst all his countrymen are persecuted; and secondly, to guard ourselves against the coming of the ships under this pretext being a feint or trick upon us (which is far from being improbable). But you need only mention the first reason to him.'

Were King Philip's doubts justified, or was Raleigh sincere in the message which he had entrusted to Sarmiento? The full scope of the favourite's designs and the extent to which the Queen herself was privy to them remain obscure. Raleigh undoubtedly had a taste for intrigue and was anxious to establish his own relations with foreign courts; political reinsurance was a common enough practice in Elizabeth's days. Or it may be that Raleigh kept the Queen informed, as Hawkins had done, of every detail of his negotiations and of the real intentions which underlay them. We are too far removed in time and temper from those subtle schemers to see into their real motives.

If indeed Sarmiento had let himself be deceived by Raleigh's fair words, he was to be more amply and tragically avenged on his captor than he could know. We learn from Raleigh's *History of the World* that they had much interesting and cordial talk together on matters relating to the Indies. A 'worthy gentleman' he calls Sarmiento, a man, both scholar and warrior, after his own heart, whose unquenchable thirst for exploring the wonders of the New World was only equalled by his courage and pertinacity in seeking to carry into effect the great designs which his imagination conceived. No doubt he was chary of talking freely of the ambition nearest to his heart—the consolidation of his colony on the Straits, for Raleigh was, for all his courteous attentions, one of the most powerful captains of Spain's bitterest rival and might be tempted to deal a fatal counterstroke before the passage between the Atlantic and the Pacific had been closed by Sarmiento's fortifications.

Raleigh's too close enquiries could be parried, it seems, as often as not, by a light-hearted and ingenious evasion. 'I remember', Raleigh tells us in his *History of the World*, 'a pretty jest of Don Pedro Sarmiento, a worthy gentleman who had been employed by his King in planting a colony in the Streights of Magellan: for when I asked him, being then my prisoner, some questions about an island in those Streights, which methought might have done better benefit or displeasure to his enterprise, he told me merrily that it was to be called the "Painters Wife's Island", saying that whilst the fellow drew that map, his wife, setting by, desired him to put in one country for her that she, in imagination, might have an island of her own.'

Other and safer themes existed on which Sarmiento could discourse more frankly and find Raleigh an eager listener. He could tell of the wonders of the ancient Inca empire and the epic of the Spanish conquest, and of the part which he had played himself in capturing the last of the Incas in his mountain fastness. After returning from his voyage of discovery to the Solomon Islands Sarmiento had cast around for fresh fields of exploration and conquest and become deeply interested in the various attempts which had previously been made to penetrate the vast forests which stretched away east of the Andes towards the Atlantic. Some of the more adventurous Incas had attempted to lead their armies into these barbarous lands, and there were reports of the existence of rich and powerful kingdoms which they had conquered and civilised. Though many of the conquistadores had tried, none had succeeded in reaching those mythical lands. But despite the failure of their expeditions, belief in the existence of a populous country, immensely rich in gold and precious stones, continued to gain ground. The Spaniards called it El Dorado, after the prince who would plunge, a glistening figure sprinkled from head to foot with gold dust, into a great lake to which they gave the name of Paytiti.

At the request of the Viceroy, Sarmiento had written an account of all the expeditions attempted by the Spaniards into the unknown lands to the east of the Andes. It was a sober narrative, packed with topographical and historical information, from which any reference to the fabulous or mythical had been rigorously excluded. But though he did not mention it by name, Sarmiento was a firm believer in the existence of an El Dorado. In the Vilcapampa campaign against Tupac Amaru he had served under Alvaro Maldonado, a conquistador noted alike for his burly frame and his unfailing good luck, who must have told him many tales of the daring and ill-fated expedition which he had led but a few years ago into the forests east of the Andes. Sarmiento reported to the Viceroy that Alvaro Maldonado had, in the course of his expedition, 'received full and certain tidings of the river and lake of Paipite (Paytiti) . . . for he had penetrated more deeply than anyone else into that country, and came nearest to that of which he had the said tidings'.

Raleigh was an eager student of the Spanish chroniclers, and once his interest had been aroused by the El Dorado story he must have searched the works of Cieza de León, Lopez de Gomara, and many others for every scrap of information he could gather on the subject. From Sarmiento, whose natural loquacity may have been heightened by the desire to lead his captor's thoughts into regions where they would be least likely to jeopardise his own cherished schemes, Raleigh would have heard many a convincing argument and picturesque detail pointing to the existence of the fabulous city. It can surely have been only Sarmiento whom he had in mind when he wrote in his *Epistle Dedicatory* to his *Discoverie of Guiana*: 'Many years since, I had knowledge by relation, of that mighty, rich, and beawtifull Empire of Guiana, and of that great and Golden Citie, which the spanyards call El Dorado, and the naturals Manoa, which Citie was conquered, reedified, and enlarged by

a younger sonne of Guaynacapa Emperor of Peru at such time as Francisco Pazaro and others conquered the saide Empire, from his two elder brethern Guascar, and Atabaliba, both then contending for the same'. Elsewhere in his *Discoverie* Raleigh avers that 'when Francisco Pazaro, Diego Almagro, and others conquered the said Empire of Peru, and had put to death Atabaliba sonne to Guaynacapa, which Atabaliba had formerly caused his eldest brother to be slaine, one of the younger sonnes of Guaynacapa fled out of Peru, and tooke with him many thousandes of those souldiers of the Empyre called Oreiones, and with those and many others which followed him, he vanquished all that tract and valley of America which is situate between the great rivers of Amazones and Baraquona, otherwise called Orenoke and Maranion'.

This Guayna Capa, Sarmiento tells us in his *History of the Incas*, had no less than fifty sons, but almost all of them perished in the civil wars between Huascar and Atahualpa (Raleigh's 'Atabaliba'). The only survivors were Paullo Topa, who became a Christian and lived peacefully in Cuzco under the name of Don Cristóbal Paullo, and the warlike Manco who led the great revolt against the Spaniards before retreating into the wilds of Vilcapampa to meet his ultimate fate at the hands of Spanish deserters who had found shelter at his court. It could then have been only the unfortunate Manco who, in Raleigh's exalted imagination, had founded the 'mighty, rich and beawtifull Empire of Guiana'. Although Sarmiento had himself taken a prominent part in the Vilcapampa campaign and the capture of the last Inca, he seems to have had only the vaguest knowledge of the circumstances of Manco's death, and limits himself to recording in his *History* that the son of Guayna Capa 'died or was killed'. Most probably Sarmiento had heard talk of the existence of a secret sanctuary in the woods or mountains where Manco and his sons chose to dwell when they were not with their armies. The Viceroy's expedition had occupied

Vitcos and other Inca strongholds in Vilcapampa but Sarmiento had found there no trace of the House of the Virgins of the Sun, the great temple and other sacred buildings where the ancient rites were still said to be observed. He could only assume that this sanctuary or city was located in some remote spot not yet discovered by the Spaniards, and he may have confided his surmise to Raleigh. Sarmiento was right; but the lost city, when its amazing ruins were finally discovered in our own times at the place we call Machu Pichu, was perched on a mountain ridge in the Vilcapampa range and not many hundreds of leagues away, as Raleigh so confidently believed, in distant Guiana.

Around this mirage of the lost city of the Incas, Raleigh gradually constructed his grandiose schemes to win an empire which should outshine Peru and Mexico in wealth and challenge the supremacy of the King of Spain in the New World. The inhabitants of the mythical kingdom were to be wooed with statesmanlike pledges and promises: 'The offers to be made to the Guianians', he wrote, 'and performed on our partes may be these. 1. First that we will defend them, their wives, children and countreys against the Spaniards and all other invaders. 2. Then that we will helpe them to recover their country from Peru. 3. That we will instructe them in liberall arts of civility behoofsfull for them that thei may be comparable to any Christian people. 4. and lastly that we will teach them the use of weapons. . . .' If the venture failed to yield the glittering rewards which Raleigh promised would result from the royal permission to embark upon it, then, he added, 'I will be contented to lose her highnes fauour and good opinion for euer, and my life withal'.

In all this, we seem to hear the same confident assurance, the same impressive marshalling of arguments based on a wholly fallacious premise, that we have met with in Sarmiento. The case, from the viewpoint of Spanish interests, for keeping

English intruders out of the South Sea by fortifying the only known sea route from the Atlantic (if there *was* only this one route) and establishing on its shores a Spanish colony (if a colony *could* be established) was as boldly logical as was Raleigh's scheme, from the viewpoint of English interests, for the destruction of the Spanish monopoly in the New World. Sarmiento's plan was doomed to fail through the rigours of climate and other natural obstacles (even before the discovery of the route round Cape Horn) as surely as Raleigh's scheme was doomed by the non-existence of the fabled empire which he sought. Sarmiento had sworn, with his usual vehement self-assurance, that he would either bring the enterprise or his own life to a conclusion, and that they could cut off his head if he was to prove wrong. Though other trials and sufferings in plenty yet lay in store for him, he was not called upon to redeem his dread vow as was Raleigh. Fate would surely have been kinder to both had she not ordained that *The Serpent* and the *Mary Sparke of Plimouth* should catch sight of the little craft which bore Sarmiento back to Spain. Even in captivity, Sarmiento was not one to cease from pursuing his own will-o'-the-wisp. His was a nature which imparts to others the fervour of its own delusions and lures them on to the quest which can only end in tragedy.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

IN FRENCH DUNGEONS

On taking leave of the court at Windsor, Sarmiento travelled to Calais, where he was received with great honour by the Governor. From there he proceeded to Dunkirk where he conferred with the Duke of Parma on 'affairs of England, which it was meet that he should know so that he might put certain military matters to rights, which he did'. Sarmiento must have travelled in princely style, for by the time he reached Paris on 21st November, the money which Raleigh had advanced him was spent, and he was forced to borrow another 300 ducats from Don Bernardino de Mendoza, the Spanish Ambassador, for the further expenses of his journey. Sarmiento gave the Ambassador a full account of the conversations he had had in the English court, and after receiving despatches to be delivered to the King, he set out once more for Madrid.

But Sarmiento was not to be left to enjoy his good fortune for long. On 9th December, whilst spending the night in an inn on the road between Bourdeaux and Bayonne, there befell a new misfortune, fatal alike for his own career and for the success of the delicate mission entrusted him by the English court. He was surprised and captured by a company of Huguenot arquebusiers in the service of Henri de Béarne, mortal foes of the Catholics and of the King of Spain. Perhaps he might have escaped with the loss of his money and personal belongings had not his interpreter, one Ramos from Irún, played him the same trick as the Portuguese pilot when he had fallen

into the hands of the English privateers, and confided to the Huguenots that he was a most important personage from whom an exceptionally fat ransom might be extracted.

Sarmiento blustered and pleaded, declaring that France and Spain were at peace and that it was a scandal for a Spanish envoy to be detained. He flourished the passport given him by Queen Elizabeth, the friend and ally of the Huguenots. But his captors turned a deaf ear to his ravings and showed no intention of releasing their prize. After quarrelling amongst themselves as to 'who should devour the wretched prisoner', they demanded an immense sum for his ransom. 'They put such a price on my head', Sarmiento relates, 'as if I had been a great prince or an alchemist who knew the secret of producing precious metals. The first figure they asked for was 30,000 escudos, and news of this spread throughout all France.' Henri de Béarne also demanded in exchange for Sarmiento's freedom that Odet de la Noue, captured by the Spaniards in Flanders, should be set free, and that his father, the famous Huguenot chief François de la Noue, should be released from the pledge extracted from him not to take up arms against Spain. These were demands which Sarmiento knew Philip could scarcely concede, and when Henri de Béarne and Colonel Castelnau, in whose charge he had been placed, pressed him to renew his petitions, Sarmiento flew into a rage and challenged the latter to a duel. The Huguenot's reply was to shut him up in the dungeon of Mont-de-Marsan. He was to languish there for three years and eight months.

Both the Spanish Ambassador in Paris and Sir Walter Raleigh made repeated efforts to secure the release of their unfortunate envoy. The Ambassador sought an audience of the French King who declared that Sarmiento ought to be released but that he was quite unable to enforce his royal wishes on his rebellious Huguenot subjects. Raleigh despatched two gentlemen with letters from the Queen to the Prince de Béarne requesting that

he should be placed at liberty. Neither of these intercessions had the least effect. Sarmiento's plight went steadily from bad to worse. Colonel Castelnau proved himself an utterly heartless jailor who threatened his prisoner with torture and death if arrangements were not speedily concluded for the payment of the ransom. The longer the interminable negotiations dragged on, the more callous became the treatment meted out to the unfortunate prisoner. 'Then they forbade him to go to mass and receive communion,' Sarmiento complained to King Philip, 'and set double guards and thick locks at his doors, threatening him hourly with death. But God alone sustained him in this cruel prison, whose gloomy dampness caused his hair and his teeth to fall out and his limbs to grow stiff; and for change and relief they cast him into a dungeon and left him in infernal darkness, shut off from all human contact and left to the music of rats and frogs from the castle moat hard by the inferno where he was kept – such a stenching hole, that those who brought him food could not suffer to enter in.'

Buried alive in the dungeons of this 'Castillo Infernal', as the prisoner called it in his letters of desperate supplication to King Philip, Sarmiento could have gleaned but fitful and scanty news of the course events were taking in the world outside. His thoughts must often have dwelt on the tiny colony which he had been forced to leave behind on the distant shores of the Straits of Magellan and which he must have known was slowly perishing of destitution, cold, and hunger. The population of Nombre de Jesús had amounted, at the time of the Governor's departure, to 193 souls, with another hundred or so at Rey Don Felipe. Believing that the latter site offered the better hope of survival, Captain Biedma, whom Sarmiento had left in charge at Nombre de Jesús, decided to abandon his settlement and transfer its folk to Rey Don Felipe. Their coming filled the inhabitants of the second settlement with dismay, for the place had not food, clothing, or housing enough for their own needs.

Biedma, in despair, ordered all men capable of bearing arms to turn back and retrace their steps along the coast towards Nombre de Jesús, keeping a sharp look-out to sea and living off the land as best they could. The cruel winter passed without the glimpse of a rescuing sail. Biedma set his enfeebled colonists to build two boats in which the inhabitants of Rey Don Felipe, now reduced to Biedma himself, Sarmiento's nephew Juan Juarez, a Franciscan friar, five women, and fifty men, at length embarked. The boats must have been poorly constructed or the men too weak to handle them, for one struck a shoal and foundered before they had sailed six leagues. The voyage was abandoned and the survivors, except for a garrison of twenty which returned to the deserted settlement, were split up into small groups and left to forage on the shores of the Straits. By the end of the following winter, cold, starvation, and the hostility of the Indians had accounted for all except fifteen men and three women.

Such was the pitiful state to which Sarmiento's colony had been reduced when, in February 1587, three ships under the command of Thomas Cavendish entered the Straits. Whilst held captive by the English in Plymouth, he had learnt of 'Telariscandi's' expedition to the South Sea. Would his colony, he must have anxiously asked himself, prove strong enough to bar the way through the Straits? He could not know that, at the beginning of 1587, the expedition had reached the mouth of the Straits and had observed signals, either of distress or of welcome (for the ships were taken for Spanish) from the shore. Cavendish sent a boat to investigate and found that the colony had now dwindled to a total of fifteen men and three women, all the others having died of starvation or sickness. Cavendish offered to take the pitiful remnants of the settlement aboard. The Spaniards hesitated, uncertain whether to entrust their lives to the hands of heretics and enemies. Whilst they stood still undecided, the wind freshened, and Cavendish resolved to

profit from it for the passage of the Straits. Only one Spaniard, a soldier called Tomé Hernandez, made up his mind in time to come aboard, and later deserted and lived to give the Viceroy an account of what had passed in the colony since Sarmiento had been torn from it. Cavendish, meanwhile, sailed on through the Straits to find the second settlement, Rey Don Felipe, a city of the dead. A corpse still dangled from the gallows, and the bodies of the other settlers, emaciated with starvation and disease, lay stretched inside their log cabins. This lugubrious scene must even have impressed the privateers. Cavendish stopped only long enough to take aboard the caunons which Sarmiento had mounted with such toil and such high hopes. Then, changing the name of the place on his chart to that of Port Famine, he sailed on.

All this Sarmiento could not have known. The only news which may have reached him from England would have been of Raleigh's attempts to intervene in his favour and secure his release. But after a few months' fruitless negotiations, his friends in the English court began to lose interest in his fate. Neither he nor his overtures for peace with King Philip were needed any longer. The die had been cast for war, and Raleigh, no less ardently than the Queen's other captains, was preparing to parry the formidable blow which Philip was known to be preparing against England. At the end of 1588, the news of the defeat of the Invincible Armada must have reached Sarmiento. How keenly he would have felt his country's humiliation we can imagine. But the effect of the national disaster upon his own personal plight was unexpectedly favourable. The sudden capture of large numbers of Spanish notables created a glut on the international ransom market and brought his own price down to a sum which it at last seemed not impossible to raise. From the original demand for 30,000 escudos it fell first to 15,000 escudos and four good Spanish horses (valued at some 400 escudos apiece) thence, after further haggling, to 6,000 escudos and

four horses. Even this relatively reasonable sum was beyond the limits to which Sarmiento's credit would stretch. The Spanish Ambassador in Paris had suggested in confidence to King Philip, that as Henri de Béarne had unlawfully siezed and held to ransom a Spanish subject, though no state of war existed between the two countries, Philip would be legally justified in distraining upon the estates held by the French prince in territories under the control of Spain, and paying for Sarmiento's ransom out of these funds. This shrewd proposal does not seem to have found favour with Philip, who was not however prepared to find the money himself. The prisoner was therefore obliged to petition the King that the money should be raised by discounting the amount from the sums owed to him as arrears of salary in his capacity of Captain-General, Governor-Designate and other offices. In his despair, Sarmiento was even prepared to renounce all claims on the Treasury whatsoever, if only his ransom would be paid, 'for I have no desire for wealth,' he wrote, 'save only as a means of escaping hence, and if the whole world were mine, I would give it in return for my liberty. . . . It does not behove my Lord that men should be lost for lack of money, for money can be found from mines, but not so men.'

The proposal that the sum needed for Sarmiento's ransom should be discounted from his claims on the Treasury was finally approved and authority given for the money to be made over. Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa was once more a free man.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

LAST GLIMPSES

By the beginning of 1590 Sarmiento was back once more in Spain. But the last three and a half years in the 'Castillo Infernal' must have aged him grievously, crushing at last that small and hardy frame that had withstood the fatigues of a hundred voyages, campaigns, and marches, but was still prepared, 'with cheerful countenance and ready will, my zeal as keen as ever – nay, keener, now that the need is greater – to offer my services, with God's favour, until bringing the task, or my life, to its end'. On 15th September 1590 he presented to the King his *Summary Relation of the Second Voyage of Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa, Governor and Captain-General of the Straits of the Mother of God, formally called of Magellan, and of the colonies established and to be thereon established for Your Majesty*. It is a vivid, moving document, in which the account of his own misfortunes takes up but little space and which ends with an earnest supplication to the King, 'for the blood of Our Lord Christ Jesus, to remember those your poor vassals, and not to rest content with sending them some relief, but to persevere until they are firmly established and the enemies of God and Your Majesty daunted by the closing of the Straits, for which I offer myself, with the favour of God and of Your Majesty, so long as God grants me life'.

The *Summary Relation* was followed up during the course of 1590 and 1591 by the presentation of a number of memoranda

setting forth in detail what would be required in terms of manpower, supplies, munitions, and shipping for a fresh expedition to the Straits. The essence of Sarmiento's project remained the same – the construction of two strong forts to command the narrows, with adequate garrisons of soldiers and artillery-men, and enough settlers to form the nucleus of a colony which in time could become sufficiently flourishing to provide for the maintenance of the garrisons. In order to relieve the Spanish colonists of extreme fatigue and to raise their prestige in the eyes of the local Indians, Sarmiento added the recommendation that their number should be augmented by a few dozen score of negroes. He also made the sensible suggestion that the voyage to the Straits would be robbed of much of its perils if two small settlements could be constructed at convenient distances on the Patagonian mainland, where safe anchorages were available, between the estuary of the River Plate and the mouth of the Straits.

The possibility of sending relief and reinforcements to the Straits had, in point of fact, been under consideration ever since Diego Flores de Valdés first returned from his inauspicious voyage. Now, with the reappearance of Sarmiento, the prospects for the venture were studied more closely. But the odds were even more heavily against it than ever before. The defeat of the Invincible Armada had destroyed Spain's overwhelming maritime supremacy and the seas were infested with privateers. Spain's most urgent need was to secure the adequate protection of the great convoys to and from her overseas possessions. She had neither ships nor men to spare for hazardous and unprofitable adventures. It is not impossible either that some inkling may have been gained of the grim truth that there were no longer any colonists left to succour on the shores of the Straits. At the beginning of 1590, Captain Andrew Merick had sailed his ship, the *Delight*, into the Straits and put into Port Famine where he took off the sole survivor of the colony, a soldier.

who had been living for many months completely alone, managing to keep body and soul together with what he killed with his arquebus. Even this man was fated not to return alive to Europe. The voyage back was a disastrous one and he must have perished by starvation or drowning, for his name does not figure amongst those of the half dozen surviving members of the company. More than two and a half centuries were to pass before colonists were to be seen again on the shores of the Straits.

Whilst the fate of his beloved colony remained, as ever, Sarmiento's dominating obsession, he seems at this period to have found some solace for his cares and disappointments in literary pursuits. The stream of narratives, reports, letters, and memoranda in which his activities are exhaustively portrayed show that he was as ready to take up the pen as the sword. Though often given to prolixity and occasionally to pedantry, his prose possesses a robust and picturesque vigour enlivened by telling phrases which express his own personality as vividly as they illumine the object of his description. In his early days in Peru, it will be recalled, he had for a time earned his living by teaching Latin. He had also struck up a friendship with a kindred spirit called Enrique Garcés, who won celebrity as the discoverer of quicksilver in Peru and later as a poet. Garcés was now living in Spain, and had just completed his translation of Petrarch's sonnets. To this work Sarmiento contributed a complementary octave and three sonnets. These excursions into the field of poetry are stilted enough affairs and add little to Sarmiento's varied titles to fame. They do however illustrate the remarkable versatility of his interests and his readiness – more in the manner of the great Elizabethans than of his own compatriots – to turn with equal enthusiasm, if not with equal felicity, from nautical and military prowess to the scientific, humanistic, historical and literary pursuits of the day.

- The Council of the Indies, unable for the moment to offer

Sarmiento an active appointment befitting his rank and experience, found him literary employment as official censor to the third part of a long poem called *Eulogies of Illustrious Men in the Indies*, written by Juan de Castellanos. The first two parts had already been published, the second being warmly commended by Ercilla, the author of the famous epic on the struggle between Spaniards and Araucanians. Sarmiento proved to be a far severer critic. He strove with his author, as he had striven with weak-kneed superiors and treacherous men, deleting some lines as immodest and substituting others of his own composition, angrily disagreeing with him on points of Indian history and etymology, and waxing indignant with the poet for refusing to regard the Inca General Quizquiz as a tyrant, whereas he, Sarmiento, had categorically stated the contrary in his *History of the Incas*. With a stroke of the pen the merciless censor suppressed 109 sheets containing a Discourse to Captain Drake (their author prudently kept another copy which has come down to us); he could scarcely have been expected to deal otherwise, for the Discourse described the attack on Callao by Drake and the expedition hastily sent by the Viceroy in pursuit, in which Alvaro de Mendaña, Sarmiento's old rival in the voyage of discovery to the Solomons, is made to play a brilliant part! Even Sarmiento's historic voyage through the Straits from Peru to Spain is narrated in an off-hand and confused way. No wonder, then, that Sarmiento saw fit to prune away over 5,000 lines of the poem.

But the censorship of second-rate narrative poetry, for all the opportunity which it offered of imposing his own views of life and letters and fustigating those with which he disagreed, was not the sort of occupation to satisfy his restless spirit for long. He must, besides, have felt the pinch of poverty, for the Treasury was slow to settle its long outstanding accounts with him. From this period, in all probability, stems the undated *Relation* reminding His Majesty of the many offices held-

under the Crown and humbly beseeching some recompense. It seems likely that it was this petition, with its enumeration of arduous duties fulfilled 'by land and sea, in times of war and times of peace, with sword and with pen, amidst most grave events and occurrences, with prosperous result and perils safely passed - all thanks, honour, and glory to God' - which at last secured the favour so ardently desired. A new post of rank and responsibility was found for the old warrior. But Sarmiento's gratitude was tempered with disappointment. It was not the command of a new expedition to the Straits as he had hoped; no expedition, indeed, was to be sent. So Sarmiento humbly accepted the appointment 'in the interim' and, in another *Memorial* preserved in the Council of the Indies (probably the last in date which we have from his own hand) he respectfully reminded His Majesty that 'as the matter of the Straits is that which most concerns the service of Your Majesty at this present . . . he implores Your Majesty, by the blood of Our Lord Christ Jesus, to call to mind those your loyal and constant vassals who, to serve Your Majesty, were content to remain in regions so remote (and which inspired such fear in those who chose to flee away from them) trusting in the mercy of God and of your Majesty, that you would visit and succour them, as Pedro Sarmiento promised them in your royal name'.

To this final and moving appeal there seems to have come no reply. The last of Sarmiento's colonists was now dead, and of the Governor himself we now catch but brief and fleeting glimpses. The interim appointment which he had agreed to accept was that of *almirante* of a squadron of galleons detailed to escort a fleet to the Indies under the command of General Juan de Uribe Apallúa. A letter from the General dated 24th April 1592 reports that the fleet is ready to put to sea. It sails. The stately ships head out towards America and are lost to sight from the coast of Spain and from the record of surviving

documents.* How fortune favoured him in this new quest and with what dreams of discovery and conquest Sarmiento filled the span of life which still remained to him we do not know. Neither can we tell the manner of his death, nor the place where his bones were laid to rest. For memorial he has left only his own writings and the trails which we have followed, blazed over land and sea, by his deeds.

*The existence of other contemporaries bearing the same name makes it difficult to trace with accuracy the last phase of our hero's life. Sir Clements Markham held that he lived to make another voyage to Mexico and thence to the Philippines to attempt further conquests. Mendiburu's *Diccionario*, on the other hand, concludes its brief and inaccurate account of his life by observing that he died in Spain and is buried in San Lúcar de Barrameda. Yet another Pedro Sarmiento is recorded as being alive in the City of Potosí as late as 1610 and enjoying, at the age of sixty years, a pleasant income of 1,000 pesos a year. Such a peaceful and prosperous old age, we may at least be sure, was not to crown our Sarmiento's quest.

POSTSCRIPT

Sarmiento's quest may almost be said to have been interrupted but not terminated, by his death. For nearly two centuries, the mists of silence and oblivion descend upon him, obscuring all but a few faint traces of the man and his work, as the drifting storm-clouds so often obscure the huge bulk of the mountain on Tierra del Fuego which today bears his name. The importunate, contentious voice telling of campaigns and voyages, of myths, legends and histories, of grievances, protests, petitions, and exhortations, lies stifled beneath the dust of the royal archives. None seemed bold enough to attempt afresh the ventures where he had striven and failed. Then at length the mists begin to clear, the documents are brought to light, other hands begin to build on the foundations which he laid. Today, Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa smiles down upon us from the halls of fame with the brightness of an ancient portrait which has been skilfully cleaned and restored.

For nearly 200 years after their discovery by Sarmiento and Alvaro de Mendaña, the Solomon Islands remained lost to the world. Mendaña made another attempt, twenty-seven years after the first voyage, to return and colonise them, but the venture ended in failure and the death of the General. It was not until 1767 that Carteret rediscovered them, and Europeans and South Sea islanders were once more brought into uneasy contact with each other and the primitive life of the natives gradually forced to make terms with the civilisation and relig-

ion of the white man. In one respect, Sarmiento proved to have been a shrewd prophet. The gold which the Spaniards had sought in vain but which he firmly believed to exist has been discovered in rich deposits in Guadalcanal. The 'great land to the south' which he mistakenly thought to lie nearer to the American continent is today the great Dominion of Australia.

If a chain of islands stretching for several hundred miles across the ocean could be lost so easily and for so long, it is little wonder that the slight manuscript embodying Sarmiento's historical researches should have lain forgotten for an even greater period. In 1893 the *History of the Incas* was found by a German scholar in the library of Göttingen University and published some years later. It was at once recognised as a work of unique authority, despite the bias of the thesis which it manifestly strove to prove, and the product of an original and curious mind. For generations men had learnt to look at the vanished empire of the Incas in the sweetly idealised light shed by Garcilasso de la Vega's celebrated *Commentaries*. Sarmiento's unadorned chronicle of the military growth of a virile and sternly autocratic empire provides a more trustworthy, if less charmingly romanticised, account of a remarkable people, and has won for its author an assured place as a scholar and man of letters.

Sarmiento's supreme endeavour – the founding of a settlement on the shores of Magellan Straits – had to wait until the middle of the nineteenth century before men were found to dare again where he had failed. In 1843, a Chilean expedition under Captain Juan Williams landed to found a colony and take possession of the territory in the name of the Republic of Chile. As a last trick of the adverse fate which pursued him throughout his life, it was decreed that the colony, when at length it came to be reborn, should be fathered by a descendant of those heretic Englishmen against whom Sarmiento had striven to bar the Straits, and on behalf of men who had recently

risen in revolt from the Spain which the old conquistador had served so faithfully. Though it was thus but a foster-child of Sarmiento's dreams, the new settlement grew and prospered. Twice it was ravaged by mutineers and its ruin completed by marauding Indians, and twice rebuilt. Men learned how to tame the climate and introduce new sources of wealth. Immense flocks of sheep began to graze the pampas, steamships defied the currents and tempests which had so mercilessly driven Sarmiento's frail craft from the Straits, and the flourishing city of Punta Arenas arose not far from the spot where Rey Don Felipe had become Port Famine.

Here, on this soil wrested for man's use from the grip of a hostile nature, stands the memorial to Sarmiento's brave endeavour. Here he would have wished his bones to lie. And could he have caused an epitaph to be engraved above them, he might fittingly have chosen this refrain from an old Spanish *romance*:

My ornaments are arms
My pastime is in war
My bed is cold upon the wold
My lamp yon star!

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